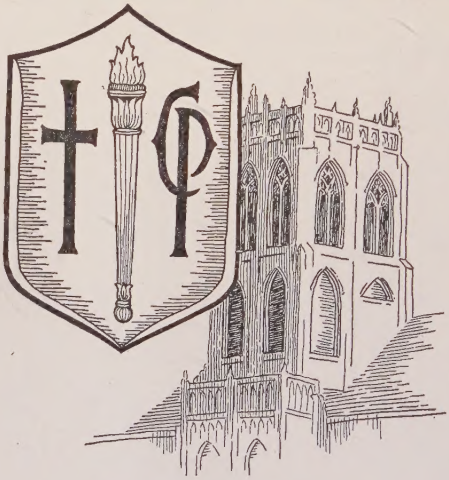

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LANDOR'S

IMAGINARY CONVERSATIONS.

Only One Hundred and Fifty copies of this Large Paper Edition have been printed for England, and Fifty for America (acquired by Macmillan & Co.)

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Walter Savage Landor,
Ætat 65.

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DIALOGUES OF LITERARY MEN.

DIALOGUES OF LITERARY MEN.

IX. DAVID HUME AND JOHN HOME.[1]

Hume. We Scotchmen, sir, are somewhat proud of our families and relationships; this is however a nationality which perhaps I should not have detected in myself, if I had not been favored with the flattering present of your tragedy. Our names, as often happens, are spelled differently; but I yielded with no reluctance to the persuasion that we are, and not very distantly, of the same stock.

Home. I hope, sir, our mountains will detain you among them some time, and I presume to promise you that you will find in Edinburgh a society as polished and literate as in Paris.

Hume. As literate I can easily believe, my cousin, and per-

[1 The date of this Conversation must have been about the summer of 1766, when Hume went to live in Edinburgh after his return from France. The Conversation reads as though Landor had supposed that Hume and Home had not met before. But in fact they had been for some time acquainted. Hume dedicated the 1758 edition of his "Essays and Treatises" to Home. Both men considered themselves as belonging to the same "name," and in his will Hume pleasantly alludes to the difference of spelling, as one of the two points on which alone the friends differed; the other was the precedence in merit of port or claret, see p. 10 of the "Biography of Hume," which Dr Birkbeck Hill has concealed in his notes to "The Letters of David Hume" (Clarendon Press, 1888). The discussion in the Conversation on the borderland between Religion and Morality is a theme often referred to in Hume's essays. The particular instance of a brother and sister innocently wedded may have been derived from the essay entitled "A Dialogue;" the other instance may have been taken from a similar discussion in Boswell's "Johnson," iii. p. 347-8 (Clarendon Press, 1887). (Imag. Convers., ii., 1824. ii., 1826. Works, i., 1846. Works, iv., 1876.)]

haps as polished, if you reason upon the ingredients of polish; but there is certainly much more amenity and urbanity at Paris than anywhere else in the world, and people there are less likely to give and take offence. All topics may be discussed without arrogance and superciliousness: an atheist would see you worship a stool or light a candle at noon without a sneer at you; and a bishop, if you were well-dressed and perfumed, would argue with you calmly and serenely, though you doubted the whole Athanasian creed.

Home. So much the worse: God forbid we should ever experience this lukewarmness in Scotland!

Hume. God, it appears, has forbidden it; for which reason, to show my obedience and submission, I live as much as possible in France, where at present God has forbidden no such thing.

Home. Religion, my dear sir, can alone make men happy and keep them so.

Hume. Nothing is better calculated to make men happy than religion, if you will allow them to manage it according to their minds; in which case the strong men hunt down others until they can fold them, entrap them, or noose them. Here, however, let the discussion terminate. Both of us have been in a cherry orchard, and have observed the advantages of the jacket, hat, and rattle.

Home. Our reformed religion does not authorize any line of conduct diverging from right reason: we are commanded by it to speak the truth to all men.

Hume. Are you likewise commanded to hear it from all men?

Home. Yes, let it only be proved to be truth.

Hume. I doubt the observance: you will not even let the fact be proved; you resist the attempt; you blockade the preliminaries. Religion, as you practise it in Scotland, in some cases is opposite to reason and subversive of happiness.

Home. In what instance?

Hume. If you had a brother whose wife was unfaithful to him without his suspicion; if he lived with her happily; if he had children by her; if others of which he was fond could be proved by you, and you only, not to be his,—what would you do?

Home. Oh the harlot! we have none such here, excepting the wife indeed (as we hear she is) of a little lame blear-eyed lieutenant,

brought with him from Sicily, and bearing an Etna of her own about her, and truly no quiescent or intermittent one, which Mungo Murray (the apprentice of Hector Abercrombie) tells me has engulfed half the dissolutes in the parish. Of[2] the married men who visited her, there was never one whose boot did not pinch him soon after, or the weather was no weather for corns and rheumatisms, or he must e'en go to Glasgow to look after a bad debt, the times being too ticklish to bear losses. I run into this discourse, not fearing that another philosopher will, like Empedocles, precipitate himself into the crater, but merely to warn you against the husband, whose intrepidity on entering the houses of strangers has caught many acute and wary folks. After the first compliments, he will lament to you that elegant and solid literature is more neglected in our days than it ever was. He will entreat you to recommend him to your bookseller; his own having been too much enriched by him had grown insolent. It is desirable that it should be one who could advance three or four guineas: not that he cares about the money, but that it is always best to have a check upon these people. You smile: he has probably joined you in the street already, and found his way into your study, and requested of you *by the bye* a trifling loan, as being the only person in the world with whom he could take such a liberty.

Hume. You seem to forget that I am but just arrived, and never knew him.

Home. That is no impediment: on the contrary, it is a reason the more. A new face is as inviting to him as to the mosquitoes in America. If you lend him a guinea to be rid of him, he will declare the next day that he borrowed it at your own request, and that he returned it the same evening.

Hume. Such men perhaps may have their reasons for being here; but the woman must be, as people say, like a fish out of water. Again[3] to the question. Come now, if you had a brother, I was supposing, whose wife—

[2 From "Of" to "rheumatisms" (3 lines) added in 2nd ed. From "or" to "losses" (2 lines) added in 3rd ed. From "I" to "water" (25 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

[3 First ed. reads: "parish. But if you had such a one. *Home*," &c.]

Home. Out upon her! should my brother cohabit with her? Should my nephews be defrauded of their patrimony by bastards?

Hume. You would then destroy his happiness, and his children's; for, supposing that you preserved to them a scanty portion more of fortune (which you could not do), still the shame they would feel from their mother's infamy would much outweigh it.

Home. I do not see clearly that this is a question of religion.

Hume. All the momentous actions of religious men are referable to their religion, more or less nearly; all the social duties, and surely these are implicated here, are connected with it. Suppose again that you knew a brother and sister, who, born in different countries, met at last, ignorant of their affinity, and married.

Home. Poor, blind, sinful creatures! God be merciful to them!

Hume. I join you heartily in the prayer, and would only add to it, Man be merciful to them also! Imagine them to have lived together ten years, to have a numerous and happy family, to come and reside in your parish, and the attestation of their prior relationship to be made indubitable to you by some document which alone could establish and record it: what would you do?

Home. I would snap asunder the chain that the devil had ensnared them in, even if he stood before me; I would implore God to pardon them, and to survey with an eye of mercy their unoffending bairns.

Hume. And would not you be disposed to behold them with an eye of the same materials?

Home. Could I leave them in mortal sin, a prey to the ensnarer of souls? No, I would rush between them as with a flaming sword; I would rescue them by God's help from perdition.

Hume. What misery and consternation would this rescue bring with it!

Home. They would call upon the hills to cover them, to crush and extinguish their shame.

Hume. Those who had lived together in love and innocence and felicity? A word spoken to them by their pastor brings them into irremediable guilt and anguish. And you would do this?

Home. The laws of God are above all other laws: his ways are inscrutable: thick darkness covers his throne.

Hume. My cousin, you who have written so elegant and pathetic a tragedy cannot but have read the best-contrived one in existence, the *Œdipus* of Sophocles.

Home. It has wrung my heart; it has deluged my eyes with weeping.

Hume. Which would you rather do,—cause and excite those sufferings, or assuage and quell them?

Home. Am I a Scotchman or an islander of the Red Sea, that a question like this should be asked me?

Hume. You would not then have given to Œdipus that information which drove him and Jocasta to despair?

Home.[4] As a Christian and a minister of the gospel, I am commanded to defy the devil, and to burst asunder the bonds of sin.

Hume. I am certain you would be greatly pained in doing it.

Home. I should never overcome the grief and anxiety so severe a duty would cause me.

Hume. You have now proved, better than I could have done in twenty *Essays*, that, if morality is not religion, neither is religion morality. Either of them, to be good (and the one must be and the other should be so), will produce good effects from the beginning to the end, and be followed by no remorse or repentance.

It[5] would be presumptuous in me to quote the Bible to you, who are so much more conversant in it; yet I cannot refrain from repeating, for my own satisfaction, the beautiful sentence on holiness: that "all her ways are pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." It says, not one or two paths, but *all:* for vice hath one or two passably pleasant in the season, if we could forget that, when we would return, the road is difficult to find, and must be picked out in the dark. Imagine anything in the semblance of a duty attended by regret and sorrow, and be assured that holiness has no concern in it. Admonition, it is true, is sometimes of such a nature, from that of the irregularity it would correct, as to occasion a sigh or a blush to him who gives

[4 First ed. reads: "*Home.* To him no. As," &c.]
[5 From "It" to "effect" (19 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

it: in this case, the sensation so manifested adds weight to the reproof and indemnifies the reprover. He is happy to have done what from generosity and tenderness of heart he was sorry and slow to do; and the person in whose behalf he acted must be degraded beneath the dignity of manhood, if he feels less for himself than another has felt for him. The regret is not at the performance of his duty, but at the failure of its effect.

To produce as much happiness as we can, and to prevent as much misery, is the proper aim and end of true morality and true religion. Only give things their right direction:[6] do bnt p.ace and train them well, and there is room to move easily and pleasantly in the midst of them.

Home. What! in the midst of vice and wickedness? And must we place and train those?

Hume. There was a time when what is wine was not wine, when what is vinegar was not vinegar, when what is corruption was not corruption. That which would turn into vice may not only not turn into it, but may, by discreet and attentive management, become the ground-work of virtue. A little watchfulness over ourselves will save us a great deal of watchfulness over others, and will permit the kindliest of religions to drop her inconvenient and unseemly talk of enmity and strife, cuirasses and breastplates, battles and exterminations.

Home. These carnal terms are frequent in the books of the Old Testament.

Hume. Because the books of the Old Testament were written when the world was much more barbarous and ferocious than it is at present; and legislators must accommodate their language to the customs and manners of the country.

Home. Apparently you would rather abolish the forcible expressions of our pious reformers, than the abominations at which their souls revolted. I am afraid you would hesitate as little to demolish kirks as convents, to drive out ministers as monks.

Hume. I would let ministers and their kirks alone. I would abolish monasteries, but gradually and humanely; and not until I had discovered how and where the studious and pious could

[6 First ed. reads: "direction; there is room. Do but train and place them well. *Home.* What . . . . . wickedness. *Hume.*" &c.]

spend their time better. I hold religion in the light of a medal which has contracted rust from ages. This rust seems to have been its preserver for many centuries, but after some few more will certainly be its consumer, and leave no vestige of effigy or superscription behind: it should be detached carefully and patiently, not ignorantly and rudely scoured off. Happiness may be taken away from many with the design of communicating it to more: but that which is a grateful and refreshing odor in a limited space would be none whatever in a larger; that which is comfortable warmth to the domestic circle would not awaken the chirping of a cricket, or stimulate the flight of a butterfly, in the forest; that which satisfies a hundred poor monks would, if thrown open to society at large, contribute not an atom to its benefit and emolument. Placid tempers, regulated habitudes, consolatory visitations, are suppressed and destroyed, and nothing rises from their ruins. Better let the cell be standing, than level it only for the thorn and nettle.

Home. What good do these idlers with their cords and wallets, or, if you please, with their regularities?

Hume. These have their value, at least to the possessor and the few about him. Ask rather, what is the worth of his abode to the prince or to the public? Who is the wiser for his cowl, the warmer for his frock, the more contented for his cloister, when they are taken from him? Monks, it is true, are only as stars that shine upon the desert; but tell me, I beseech you, who caused such a desert in the moral world, and who rendered so faint a light, in some of its periods, a blessing? Ignorant rulers, must be the answer, and inhuman laws. They should cease to exist some time before their antidotes, however ill-compounded, are cast away.

If we had lived seven or eight centuries ago, John Home would probably have been saying Mass at the altar, and David Hume, fatter and lazier, would have been pursuing his theological studies in the convent. We are so much the creatures of times and seasons, so modified and fashioned by them, that the very plants upon the wall, if they were as sensible as some suppose them to be, would laugh at us.

Home. Fantastic forms and ceremonies are rather what the philosopher will reprehend. Strip away these, reduce things

to their primitive state of purity and holiness, and nothing can alter or shake us, clinging, as we should, to the anchor of faith.

Hume. People clung to it long ago; but many lost their grasp, benumbed by holding too tightly. The Church of Scotland brings close together the objects of veneration and abhorrence. The evil principle, or devil, was, in my opinion, hardly worth the expense of his voyage from Persia; but, since you have him, you seem resolved to treat him nobly, hating him, defying him, and fearing him nevertheless. I would not, however, place him so very near the Creator, let his pretensions, from custom and precedent, be what they may.

Home. He is always marring the fair works of our Heavenly Father: in this labor is his only proximity.

Hume. You represent him as spurring men on to wickedness, from no other motive than the pleasure he experiences in rendering them miserable.

Home. He has no other, excepting his inveterate spite and malice against God; from which indeed, to speak more properly, this desire originates.

Hume. Has he lost his wits, as well as his station, that he fancies he can render God unhappy by being spiteful and malicious? You wrong him greatly; but you wrong God more. For in all Satan's attempts to seduce men into wickedness, he leaves every one his free will either to resist or yield; but the Heavenly Father, as you would represent him, predestines the greater part of mankind to everlasting pains and torments, antecedently to corruption or temptation. There is no impiety in asking you which is the worst: for impiety most certainly does not consist in setting men right on what is demonstrable in their religion, nor in proving to them that God is greater and better than, with all their zeal for him, they have ever thought him.

Home. This is to confound religion with philosophy, the source of nearly [7] every evil in conduct and of every error in ethics.

Hume. Religion is the eldest sister of Philosophy: on whatever subjects they may differ, it is unbecoming in either to quarrel, and most so about their inheritance.

[7] First ed. reads: "of every evil and of every error."]

Home. And have you nothing, sir, to say against the pomps and vanities of other worships, that you should assail the institutions of your native country? To fear God, I must suppose, then, is less meritorious than to build steeples, and embroider surplices, and compose chants, and blow the bellows of organs.

Hume. My dear sir, it is not because God is delighted with hymns and instruments of music, or prefers bass to tenor or tenor to bass, or Handel to Giles Halloway, that nations throng to celebrate in their churches his power and his beneficence; it is not that Inigo Jones or Christopher Wren could erect to him a habitation more worthy of his presence than the humblest cottage on the loneliest moor: it is that the best feelings, the highest faculties, the greatest wealth, should be displayed and exercised in the patrimonial palace of every family united. For such are churches both to the rich and poor.

Home Your hand, David! Pardon me, sir: the sentiment carried me beyond custom; for it recalled to me the moments of blissful enthusiasm when I was writing my tragedy, and charmed me the more as coming from you.

Hume. I explain the causes of things, and leave them.

Home. Go on, sir, pray go on; for here we can walk together. Suppose that God never heard us, never cared for us: do those care for you or hear you whose exploits you celebrate at public dinners,—our Wallaces and Bruces? Yet are not we thence the braver, the more generous, the more grateful?

Hume. I do not see clearly how the more grateful; but I would not analyze by reducing to a cinder a lofty sentiment.

Home. Surely [8] we are grateful for the benefits our illustrious patriots have conferred on us; and every act of gratitude is rewarded by reproduction. Justice is often pale and melancholy; but Gratitude, her daughter, is constantly in the flow of spirits and the bloom of loveliness. You call out to her when you fancy she is passing; you want her for your dependants, your domestics, your friends, your children. The ancients, as you know, habitually asked their gods and goddesses by which of their names it was most agreeable to them to be invoked: now let Gratitude be, what for the play of our fancy we have just

[8 From "Surely" to "us" (2 lines) added in 3rd ed.]

imagined her, a sentient living power; I cannot think of any name more likely to be pleasing to her than Religion. The simplest breast often holds more reason in it than it knows of, and more than Philosophy looks for or suspects. We almost as frequently despise what is not despicable as we admire and reverence what is. No nation in the world was ever so enlightened, and in all parts and qualities so civilized, as the Scotch. Why would you shake or unsettle or disturb those principles which have rendered us peaceable and contented?

Hume. I would not by any means.

Home. Many of your writings have evidently such a tendency.

Hume. Those of my writings to which you refer will be read by no nation: a few speculative men will take them; but none will be rendered more gloomy, more dissatisfied, or more unsocial by them. Rarely will you find one who, five minutes together, can fix his mind even on the surface: some new tune, some idle project, some light thought, some impracticable wish, will generally run, like the dazzling haze of summer on the dry heath, betwixt them and the reader. A bagpipe will swallow them up, a strathspey will dissipate them, or Romance with the death-rattle in her throat will drive them away into dark staircases and charnel-houses.

You and I, in the course of our conversation, have been at variance, as much as discreet and honest men ought to be: each knows that the other thinks differently from him, yet each esteems the other. I cannot but smile when I reflect that a few paces, a glass of wine, a cup of tea, conciliate those whom Wisdom would keep asunder.

Home. No wonder you scoff emphatically, as you pronounce the word *wisdom*.

Hume. If men would permit their minds like their children to associate freely together, if they would agree to meet one another with smiles and frankness, instead of suspicion and defiance, the common stock of intelligence and of happiness would be centupled. Probably those two men who hate each other most, and whose best husbandry is to sow burs and thistles in each other's path, would, if they had ever met and conversed familiarly, have been ardent and inseparable friends. The

minister who may order my book to be burned to-morrow by the hangman, if I, by any accident, had been seated yesterday by his side at dinner, might perhaps in another fortnight recommend me to his master, for a man of such gravity and understanding as to be worthy of being a privy councillor, and might conduct me to the treasury-bench.

X. ALFIERI AND SALOMON THE FLORENTINE JEW.[1]

Alfieri. Let us walk to the window, signor Salomon. And now, instead of the silly, simpering compliments repeated at introductions, let me assure you that you are the only man in Florence with whom I would willingly exchange a salutation.

Salomon. I must think myself highly flattered, signor Conte, having always heard that you are not only the greatest democrat, but also the greatest aristocrat, in Europe.

Alfieri. These two things, however opposite, which your smile would indicate, are not so irreconcilable as you imagine. Let[2] us first understand the words, and then talk about them. The democrat is he who wishes the people to have a due share in the government, and this share if you please shall be the principal one. The aristocrat of our days is contented with no actual share in it; but if a man of family is conscious of his dignity, and resentful that another has invaded it, he may be, and is universally, called an aristocrat. The principal difference is, that one carries outward what the other carries inward. I am thought an aristocrat by the Florentines for conversing with few

[1 I have failed to discover who Salomon was, or whether there was any such person. There is no mention of him in Alfieri's autobiography. For Alfieri, see the Conversation between *Alfieri and Metastasio*, where Landor has given a rather more detailed picture of a poet and aristocrat whose life suggests the name of Byron irresistibly. It is worth noting that in the autobiography Alfieri speaks of the sonnet of Cassiani quoted on p. 33 as a beautiful sonnet, and that he wrote a companion sonnet on the carrying away of Ganymede in imitation of it. (Imag. Convers., ii., 1824. ii., 1826. Works, ii., 1846. Works, iv., 1876.)]

[2 From "Let" to "Siena" (16 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

people, and for changing my shirt and shaving my beard on other days than festivals; which the most aristocratical of them never do, considering it, no doubt, as an excess. I am, however, from my soul a republican, if prudence and modesty will authorize any man to call himself so; and this, I trust, I have demonstrated in the most valuable of my works, the *Treatise on Tyranny* and the *Dialogue* with my friend at Siena. The aristocratical part of me, if part of me it must be called, hangs loose and keeps off insects. I see no aristocracy in the children of sharpers from behind the counter, nor, placing the matter in the most favourable point of view, in the descendants of free citizens who accepted from any vile enslaver—French, Spanish, German, or priest, or monk [3] (represented with a piece of buffoonery, like a beehive on his head and a picklock key at his girdle)—the titles of counts and marquises. In Piedmont the matter is different: we must either have been the rabble or their lords; we were military, and we retain over the populace the same rank and spirit as our ancestors held over the soldiery. But [4] we are as prone to slavery as they were averse and reluctant.

Under the best of princes we are children all our lives. Under the worse, we are infinitely more degraded than the wretches who are reduced to their servitude by war, or even by crimes; begging our master to take away from us the advantages of our education, and of our strength in mind and body. Is this picture overcharged?

Salomon. Not with bright colors certainly.

Alfieri. What think you then if we are threatened with hell by those who take away earth from us, and scourge and imprison and torture us?

Salomon. Hell is a very indifferent hospital for those who are thrust into it with broken bones. It is hard indeed, if they who lame you will not let you limp. Indeed I do hear, signor Conte, that the churchmen call you an atheist and a leveller.

Alfieri. So, during the plague at Milan, if a man walked upright in the midst of it, and without a sore about him, he was a devil or an *anointer:* it was a crime and a curse not to be

[3 First ed. reads: "monk, with a honeycomb on his head and a key," &c. Second ed. reads: "with a hive on his head and a key," &c.]

[4 From "But" to "smoother" (22 lines) added in 3rd ed.]

infected. But, signor Salomon, a poet never can be an atheist, nor can a gentleman be a leveller. For my part, I would rather walk alone in a rugged path than with the many in a smoother.

Salomon. Signor Conte, I have heard of levellers, but I have never seen one: all are disposed to level down, but nobody to level up. As for nobility, there is none in Europe beside the Venetian. Nobility must be self-constituted and independent: the free alone are noble; slavery, like death, levels all. The English comes nearest to the Venetian: they are independent, but want the main characteristic, the *self-constituted.* You have been in England, signor Conte, and can judge of them better than I can.

Alfieri. England, as you know, is governed by Pitt, the most insidious of her demagogues, and the most hostile to aristocracy. Jealous of power, and distrustful of the people that raised him to it, he enriches and attaches to him the commercial part of the nation by the most wasteful prodigality both in finance and war, and he loosens from the landed the chief proprietors by raising them to the peerage. Nearly a third of the lords have been created by him, and prove themselves devotedly his creatures.[5] This Empusa puts his ass's foot on the French, and his iron one on the English. He possesses not the advantage possessed by insects, which, if they see but one inch before them, see that inch distinctly. He [6] knows not that the machine which runs on so briskly will fall to pieces the moment it stops. He will indeed carry his point in debasing the aristocracy; but he will equally debase the people. Undivided power he will continue to enjoy; but, after his death, none will be able to say from any visible proof or appearance, *How glorious a people did he govern!* He will have changed its character in all ranks and conditions. After this it is little to say that he will have exalted its rival, who, without his interposition, would have sunk under distress

[5 Note in 1st and 2nd eds. reads: "All this refers to a state of things belonging to history, but past away from us; it being evident that nothing can be more respectable than the present English ministry. Alfieri spoke scornfully and disdainfully: because he was generally ill received in England; for although he was at that time the greatest man in Europe, he was not acknowledged or known to be so." From "this" to "English" (2 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

[6 From "He" to "stops" (2 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

and crime. But interposition was necessary to his aggrandizement, enabling him to distribute in twenty years, if he should live so long, more wealth among his friends and partisans, than has been squandered by the uncontrolled profusion of French monarchs, from the first Louis to the last.

Salomon. How happens it that England, richer and more powerful than other States, should still contain fewer nobles?

Alfieri. The greater part of the English nobility has neither power nor title. Even those who are noble by right of possession, the hereditary lords of manors with large estates attached to them, claim no titles at home or abroad. Hence in all foreign countries the English gentleman is placed below his rank, which naturally and necessarily is far higher than that of your slipshod counts and lottery-office marquises, whose gamekeepers, with their high plumes, cocked hats, and hilts of rapiers have no other occupation than to stand behind the carriage, if the rotten plank will bear them; whose game is the wren and redbreast, and whose beat is across the market.

Menestrier, who both as a Frenchman and as a Jesuit speaks contemptuously of English nobility, admits the gentlemen to this dignity. Their property, their information, their political influence, and their moral character place them beyond measure above the titularies of our country, be the rank what it may; and it is a remarkable proof of moderation in some, and of contemptuousness in others, that they do not openly claim from their king, or assume without such intervention, the titles arising from landed wealth, which conciliate the attention and civility of every class, and indeed of every individual abroad.

It is among those who stand between the peerage and the people that there exists a greater mass of virtue and of wisdom than in the rest of Europe. Much of their dignified simplicity may be attributed to the plainness of their religion, and, what will always be imitated, to the decorous life of their king; for whatever may be the defects of either, if we compare them with others round us, they are excellent.

Salomon. A young religion jumps upon the shoulders of an older one, and soon becomes like her, by mockery of her tricks, her cant, and her decrepitude. Meanwhile the old one shakes with indignation, and swears there is neither relationship nor

likeness. Was there ever a religion in the world that was not the true religion, or was there ever a king that was not the best of kings?

Alfieri. In the latter case we must have arrived nigh perfection; since it is evident from the authority of the gravest men—theologians, presidents, judges, corporations, universities, senates—that every prince is better than his father, "of blessed memory, now with God." If they continue to rise thus transcendently, earth in a little time will be incapable of holding them, and higher heavens must be raised upon the highest heavens for their reception. The lumber of our Italian courts, the most crazy part of which is that which rests upon a red cushion in a gilt chair, with stars and sheep and crosses dangling from it, must be approached as Artaxerxes and Domitian. These automatons, we are told nevertheless, are very condescending. Poor fools who tell us it! ignorant that where on one side is condescension, on the other side must be baseness. The rascals have ruined my physiognomy. I wear an habitual sneer upon my face; God confound them for it!

Salomon. This temper or constitution of mind I am afraid may do injury to your works.

Alfieri. Surely not to all: my satire at least must be the better for it.

Salomon. I think differently. No satire can be excellent where displeasure is expressed with acrimony and vehemence. When satire ceases to smile, it should be momentarily, and for the purpose of inculcating a moral. Juvenal is hardly more a satirist than Lucan: he is indeed a vigorous and bold declaimer, but he stamps too often, and splashes up too much filth. We Italians have no delicacy in wit: we have indeed no conception of it; we fancy we must be weak if we are not offensive. The scream of Pulcinello is imitated more easily than the masterly strokes of Plautus, or the sly insinuations of Catullus and of Flaccus.

Alfieri. We are the least witty of men because we are the most trifling.

Salomon. You would persuade me then that to be witty one must be grave: this is surely a contradiction.

Alfieri. I would persuade you only that banter, pun, and

quibble are the properties of light men and shallow capacities; that genuine humor and true wit require a sound and capacious mind, which is always a grave one. Contemptuousness is not incompatible with them: worthless is that man who feels no contempt for the worthless, and weak who treats their emptiness as a thing of weight. At first it may seem a paradox, but it is perfectly true, that the gravest nations have been the wittiest; and in those nations some of the gravest men. In England Swift and Addison, in Spain Cervantes. Rabelais and La Fontaine are recorded by their countrymen to have been *rêveurs*. Few[7] men have been graver than Pascal; few have been wittier.

Salomon. It is indeed a remarkable thing that such should be the case among the moderns: it does not appear to have been so among the ancients.

Alfieri. I differ from you, M. Salomon. When we turn toward the Athenians, we find many comic writers, but few facetious. Menander, if we may judge from his fragments, had less humor than Socrates.[8] Quintilian says of Demosthenes, "non displicuisse illi jocos sed non contigisse." In this he was less fortunate than Phocion and Cicero. Facility in making men smile gives a natural air to a great orator, and adds thereby much effect to what he says, provided it come discreetly. It is in him somewhat like affability in a prince; excellent if used with caution. Every one must have perceived how frequently those are brought over by a touch of humor who have resisted the force of argument and entreaty. Cicero thought in this manner on wit. Writing to his brother, he mentions a letter from him, "Aristophanico modo, valde mehercule et suavem et gravem." Among the Romans, the gravest nation after the English, I think Cicero and Catullus were the wittiest. Cicero from his habits of life and studies must have been grave; Catullus we may believe to have been so, from his being tender and impassioned in the more serious part of his poetry.

Salomon. This is to me no proof; for the most tender and impassioned of all poets is Shakspeare, who certainly was him-

[7 From "Few" to "wittier" added in 2nd ed.]

[8 First ed. reads: "Socrates, and Aristophanes himself than Phocion. From "Quintilian" to "entreaty" appears as a note in 1st ed.]

self far removed from gravity, however much of it he imparted to some personages of his drama.

Alfieri. That Shakspeare was gay and pleasurable in conversation I can easily admit; for there never was a mind at once so plastic and so pliant: but, without much gravity, could there have been that potency and comprehensiveness of thought, that depth of feeling, that creation of imperishable ideas, that sojourn in the souls of other men? He was amused in his workshop: such was society. But when he left it, he meditated intensely upon those limbs and muscles on which he was about to bestow new action, grace, and majesty; and so great an intensity of meditation must have strongly impressed his whole character.

Salomon. You will, however, allow that we have no proof of gravity in Horace or Plautus.

Alfieri. On the contrary, I think we have many. Horace, like all the pusillanimous, was malignant: like all courtiers, he yielded to the temper of his masters. His lighter touches were agreeable less to his own nature than to the nature of Augustus and Mecænas, both of them fond of trifling; but in his *Odes* and his *Discourses* there is more of gravity than of gayety. That he was libidinous is no proof that he was playful; for often such men are even melancholic.

Plautus,[9] rich in language, rich in reflection, rich in character, is oftener graver than could have suited the inclinations of a coarse and tumultuous populace. What but the stong bent of his nature could have moved him to it? The English display an equal share of facetiousness and of *humor* (as they call it) in their comedies.

Salomon. I do not understand the distinction.

Alfieri. Nor indeed is it well understood by many of their best authors. It is no uncommon thing to hear, "*He has humor rather than wit.*" Here the expression can only mean *pleasantry:* for whoever has humor has wit, although it does not follow that whoever has wit has humor. Humor is wit appertaining to character, and indulges in breadth of drollery rather

[9 First ed. reads: "Plautus, who appears to me to have been by far the first of comic writers, rich," &c. Four lines below, from "The English" to "generic" (18 lines) added in 3rd ed. First and 2nd eds. read: "*Salomon.* The French are witty. *Alfieri.* This I concede," &c.]

than in play and brilliancy of point. Wit vibrates and spurts; humor springs up exuberantly, as from a fountain, and runs on. In Congreve you wonder what he will say next: in Addison you repose on what is said, listening with assured expectation of something congenial and pertinent. The French have little humor because they have little character: they excel all nations in wit, because of their levity and sharpness. The personages on their theatre are generic.

Salomon. You do allow that they are facetious: from you no small concession.

Alfieri. This I do concede to them; and no person will accuse me of partiality in their favor. Not only are they witty, but when they discover a witty thing, they value it so highly that they reserve it for the noblest purposes, such as tragedies, sermons, and funeral orations. Whenever a king of theirs is inaugurated at Rheims, a string of witticisms is prepared for him during his whole reign, regularly as the civil list; regularly as menageries, oratories, orangeries, wife, confessor, waterworks, fireworks, gardens, parks, forests, and chases. Sometimes one is put into his mouth when he is too empty, sometimes when he is too full; but he always hath his due portion, take it when or how he may. A decent one, somewhat less indeed than that of their sovereign, is reserved for the princes of the blood; the greater part of which is usually packed up with their camp-equipage; and I have seen a label to a *bon mot*, on which was written, "Brillant comme la réponse de Henri IV. quand,"—but the occasion had not been invented.

We Italians sometimes fall into what, if you will not call it witticism, you may call the plasma of witticism, by mere mistake, and against our genius.[10] A blunder, by its very stumbling, is often carried a little beyond what was aimed at, and falls upon something which, if it be not wit, is invested with its powers.

[[10] First ed. reads: "genius. Reading in a gazette, Hier le roi à travaillé avec ses ministres, and knowing the man's character, a young courtier cried innocently, 'What! his most Christian majesty condescends to dine with his subjects, and they joke upon it!' In another, Les enfans de France se promenent en carosse, &c., his sister enquired of her confessor how many there were of them he answered, 'Twenty-four or twenty-five millions.' A blunder," &c.]

Salomon. I have had opportunities to observe the obtuseness of the Tuscans in particular on these matters. Lately I lent my Molière to a man of talents; and when he returned the volumes, I asked him how he liked them: *Per Bacco*, he exclaimed, "the names are very comical,—Sguanarelli and those others." They who have no wit of their own are ignorant of it when it occurs, mistake it, and misapply it. A sailor found upon the shore a piece of amber; he carried it home, and, as he was fond of fiddling, began to rub it across the strings of his violin. It would not answer. He then broke some pieces off, boiled them in blacking, and found to his surprise and disquiet that it gave no fresh lustre to the shoe-leather. "What are you about?" cried a messmate. "Smell it, man: it is amber." "The devil take it," cried the finder, "I fancied it was resin;" and he threw it into the sea. We despise what we cannot use.

Alfieri. Your observations on Italian wit are correct. Even our comedies are declamatory: long speeches and inverted sentences overlay and stifle the elasticity of humor. The great Machiavelli is, whatever M. de Voltaire may assert to the contrary, a coarse comedian; hardly better than the cardinal Bibiena, poisoned by the Holiness of our Lord Pope Leo for wearying him with wit.*

* If Cardinal Bibiena was poisoned by Leo, an opinion to which the profligacy of the pope gave rise, and the malignity of men reception, it should be recorded in justice to his Holiness that he wished to protect the family. We find among the letters of Bembo a very beautiful and energetic one, written in the name of Leo to Francis I., relating to Bibiena. There is something not unsuspicious in the mode of expression, where he repeats that, although Bibiena thinks himself sure of dying, *there appears to be no immediate danger . . . if it should happen*, &c.

"Cum Bernardus Bibiena cardinalis aliquot jam dies ex *stomacho* laboret, *magisque timore quodam suo quam morbi vi urgente*, brevi se existimet moriturum. . . . Quanquam enim nihildum sane video, quo quidem de illius vitâ sit omnino magnopere timendum. Si id accidat quod ipse *suspicatur*, tua in illum munificentia tuumque præclarum munus non statim neque unà cum ipsius vitâ extinguatur, præsertim cum ei tam breve temporis spatium illo ipso tuo munere frui licuerit, ut ante amissum videri possit quam quale quantumve fuerit percipi ab illo cognoscive potuerit. . . . Ut ipse, si moriendum ei sit," &c.

The Italians are too credulous on poison, which at one period was almost a natural death among them. Englishmen were shocked at the

Salomon. His Holiness took afterward a stirrup-cup of the same brewery, and never had committed the same offence, poor man! I [11] should have thought the opinion of Voltaire less erroneous on wit, although it carries no weight with it on poetry or harmony.

Alfieri. It is absurd to argue with a Frenchman on any thing relating to either. The Spaniards have no palate, the Italians no scent, the French no ear. Garlic and grease and the most nauseous of pulse are the favorite cheer of the Spaniard; the

confidence with which they asserted it of two personages, who occupied in the world a rank and interest due to neither, and one of whom died in England, the other in Elba.

The last words of the letter are ready to make us unbelievers of Leo's guilt in this business. What exquisite language! what expressions of zeal and sincerity!

"Quæ quidem omnia non tam propterea colligo, quod non illud unum existimem apud te plurimum valiturum, amorem scilicet erga illum tuum, itemque incredibilem ipsius in te cultum, quod initio dixi, sed ut mihi ipsi, qui id magnopere cupio, satisfaciam; ne perfamiliari ac pernecessario meo, mihique charissimo ac suavissimo atque in omni vitæ munere probatissimo, mea benevolentia meusque amor hoc extremo ejus vitæ tempore, si hoc extremum erit, plane defuisse videatur."

In the tenth book of these epistles there is one addressed to the Cardinal, by which the Church of Loretto is placed under his care, with every rank of friendship and partiality.

"De tuâ enim in Divam pietate, in rem Romanam studio, in me autem, cui quidem familiæque meæ omnia pæne usque a puero summæ cum integritatis et fidei, tum vero curæ atque diligentiæ egregia atque præclara officia præstitisti, perveteri observantiâ voluntateque admonitus, nihil est rerum omnium quod tibi recte manderi credique posse non existimem."

It is not in human nature that a man ever capable of these feelings toward any one should poison him, when no powerful interest or deep revenge was to be gratified: the opinion, nevertheless, has prevailed; and it may be attributed to a writer not altogether free from malignity, a scorner of popes and princes, and especially hostile to the Medicean family. Paolo Giovio says that Bibiena was poisoned in a *fresh egg*. The sixteenth century was *the age of poison*. Bibiena was poisoned, we may believe; not, however, by Leo, who loved him as being his preceptor. Leo sent him into France to persuade Francis I. to enter into a league against the Turks. The object of this league was to divert both him and Charles V. from Italy, and to give the preponderating power in it to the family of Medici.

[11 From "I" to "harmony" (3 lines) added in 3rd ed. From "*Alfieri*" to "writers" (26 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

olfactory nerves of the Italian endure any thing but odoriferous flowers and essences; and no sounds but soft ones offend the Frenchman.

Salomon. And yet several of the French prose writers are more harmonious than the best of ours.

Alfieri. In the construction of their sentences they have obtained from study what sensibility has denied them. Rousseau is an exception: he beside is the only musical composer that ever had a tolerable ear for prose. Music is both sunshine and irrigation to the mind; but when it occupies and covers it too long, it debilitates and corrupts it. Sometimes I have absorbed music so totally, that nothing was left of it in its own form: my ear detained none of the notes, none of the melody: they went into the heart immediately, mingled with the spirit, and lost themselves among the operations of the fancy, whose finest and most recondite springs they put simultaneously and vigorously in motion. Rousseau [12] kept it subordinate; which must always be done with music as well as with musicians. He excels all the moderns in the harmony of his periods.

Salomon. I have heard it reported that you prefer Pascal.

Alfieri. Certainly, on the whole I consider him the most perfect of writers.

Salomon.[13] Many other of the French theologians are said to be highly eloquent; but theology is without attraction for me, so that I am ignorant of their merit.

Alfieri. How deplorable that whatever is excellent in modern style should, with hardly any deduction, be displayed by fanaticism! I am little more interested by the contentions of Fénélon and Bossuet than I am by the *Cristo Bianco* and *Cristo Nero* of the Neapolitan rabble,—two processional idols, you must know, which are regularly carried home with broken heads.

Salomon. I dare not hazard a word upon these worthies.

[12 Second ed. reads: "Rousseau is the only composer of music on the modern system who could write one sentence of poetry or prose worth reading. He kept it . . . . periods. Bossuet comes next Salomon," &c.]

[13 From "*Salomon*" to "*Alfieri*" (4 lines) added in 3rd ed. Second ed. reads: "How deplorable . . . . contentions of such men as Pascal and Bossuet with their opponents than I am," &c. From "How" to "details" (78 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

You, who had a Catholic father and whose blood is truly Christian, may ridicule them with impunity: the people who would laugh with you would stone me. Our incurable diarrhœa of words should not always make you take the other side of the road. Machiavelli is admirable for precision of style, no less than for acuteness of argument and depth of thought. Guicciardini, if his sentences were properly stopped, would be found in general both full and concise, whatever may be asserted to the contrary by the fastidious and inattentive.

Alfieri. I have often thought the same. As for Machiavelli, I would rather have written his *Discourses on the first Decade of Livius* (in which nothing is amiss but the title) than all the volumes, prose and poetry, of Voltaire. If the *Florentine History* is not so interesting as the more general one of Guicciardini, there is the same reason for it as there is that the *Batrachomyomachia* is not so interesting as the *Iliad.*

Salomon. Certainly no race of men upon earth ever was so unwarlike, so indifferent to national dignity and to personal honor, as the Florentines are now: yet in former days a certain pride, arising from a resemblance in their government to that of Athens, excited a vivifying desire of approximation where no danger or loss accompanied it; and Genius was no less confident of his security than of his power. Look from the window. That cottage on the declivity was Dante's: that square and large mansion, with a circular garden before it elevated artificially, was the first scene of Boccaccio's *Decameron.* A boy might stand at an equal distance between them, and break the windows of each with his sling. What idle fabricator of crazy systems will tell me that climate is the creator of genius? The climate of Austria is more regular and more temperate than ours, which I am inclined to believe is the most variable in the whole universe, subject, as you have perceived, to heavy fogs for two months in winter, and to a stifling heat, concentrated within the hills, for five more. Yet a single man of genius hath never appeared in the whole extent of Austria, an extent several thousand times greater than our city; and this very street has given birth to fifty.

Alfieri. Since the destruction of the republic, Florence has produced only one great man, Galileo, and abandoned him to

every indignity that fanaticism and despotism could invent. Extraordinary men, like the stones that are formed in the higher regions of the air, fall upon the earth only to be broken and cast into the furnace. The precursor of Newton lived in the deserts of the moral world, drank water, and ate locusts and wild honey. It was fortunate that his head also was not lopped off: had a singer asked it, instead of a dancer, it would have been.

Salomon. In fact it was; for the fruits of it were shaken down and thrown away: he was forbidden to publish the most important of his discoveries, and the better part of his manuscripts was burned after his death.

Alfieri. Yes, signor Salomon, those things may rather be called our heads than this knob above the shoulder, of which (as matters stand) we are rather the porters than the proprietors, and which is really the joint concern of barber and dentist.

Salomon. Our thoughts, if they may not rest at home, may wander freely. Delighting in the remoter glories of my native city, I forget at times its humiliation and ignominy. A town so little that the voice of a cabbage-girl in the midst of it may be heard at the extremities, reared within three centuries a greater number of citizens illustrious for their genius than all the remainder of the continent (excepting her sister Athens) in six thousand years. My ignorance of the Greek forbids me to compare our Dante with Homer. The propriety and force of language and the harmony of verse in the glorious Grecian are quite lost to me. Dante had not only to compose a poem, but in great part a language. Fantastical as the plan of his poem is, and, I will add, uninteresting and uninviting; unimportant, mean, contemptible, as are nine-tenths of his characters and his details, and [14] wearisome as is the scheme of his versification,—there are more thoughts highly poetical, there is more reflection, and the nobler properties of mind and intellect are brought into more intense action, not only than in the whole course of French poetry, but also in the whole of continental; nor do I think

[14] From "and" to "versification" added in 3rd ed. From "there" to "pedestal" (19 lines) added in 2nd ed. Second ed. reads: "than in the Iliad; nor do I," &c.]

(I must here also speak with hesitation) that any one drama of Shakspeare contains so many. Smile as you will, signor Conte, what must I think of a city where Michel-Angelo, Frate Bartolomeo, Ghiberti (who formed them), Guicciardini, and Machiavelli[15] were secondary men? And certainly such were they, if we compare them with Galileo and Boccaccio and Dante.

Alfieri. I smiled from pure delight, which I rarely do; for I take an interest deep and vital in such men, and in those who appreciate them rightly and praise them unreservedly. These are my fellow-citizens: I acknowledge no other; we are of the same tribe, of the same household; I bow to them as being older than myself, and I love them as being better.

Salomon. Let us hope that our Italy is not yet effete. Filangieri died but lately: what think you of him?

Alfieri. If it were possible that I could ever see his statue in a square at Constantinople, though I should be scourged for an idolater, I would kiss the pedestal. As[16] this, however, is less likely than that I should suffer for writing satirically, and as criticism is less likely to mislead me than speculation, I will revert to our former subject.

Indignation and contempt may be expressed in other poems than such as are usually called satires. Filicaia, in his celebrated address to Italy, steers a middle course.

Salomon. True, he is neither indignant nor contemptuous; but the verses of Michel-Angelo would serve rather for an example, added to which they are much better.

Alfieri. In fact, the former part of Filicaia's is verbose and confused: let us analyse them:—

> "Italia, Italia, o tu cui *die'* la sorte
> *Dono* infelice di bellezza, onde hai
> Funesta *dote* d'infiniti guai,
> Che in fronte scritti *per gran doglia* porti."

Fate gives the *gift*, and this *gift* gives the dowry, which dowry consists of infinite *griefs*, and these griefs Italy carries written on her brow, though great *sorrow!*—

> "Deh, fosti, tu *men* bella o *almen* più forte!"

[15] Second ed. for "Machiavelli" reads "Boccaccio." One line below, "Boccaccio" added in 3rd ed.]

[16] From "As" to "subject" (4 lines) added in 3rd ed.]

Men and *almen* sound wretchedly: he might have written *oppur*.* There are those who would persuade us that verbal criticism is unfair, and that few poems can resist it. The truth of the latter assertion by no means establishes the former: all good criticism hath its foundation on verbal. Long dissertations are often denominated criticisms, without one analysis; instead of which it is thought enough to say: "There is nothing finer in our language —we can safely recommend—imbued with the true spirit—destined to immortality," &c.

A perfect piece of criticism must exhibit *where* a work is good or bad; *why* it is good or bad; in what degree it is good or bad; must also demonstrate in what manner and to what extent the same ideas or reflections have come to others, and, if they be clothed in poetry, why, by an apparently slight variation, what in one author is mediocrity, in another is excellence. I have never seen a critic of Florence or Pisa or Milan or Bologna who did not commend and admire the sonnet of Cassiani on the rape of Proserpine, without a suspicion of its manifold and grave defects. Few sonnets are indeed so good; but if we examine it attentively, we shall discover its flaws and patches:—

> "Die' un alto strido, gittò i fiori, e volta
> All' improvisa *mano* che la *cinse*,
> Tutta in se *per la tema onde fù colta*
> La Siciliana vergine si strinse."

The *hand* is inadequate to embrace a *body*; *strinse*, which comes after, would have done better: and the last two verses tell only what the first two had told, and feebly; nothing can be more so than the *tema onde fù colta*.

* There is another sonnet of Filicaia *to Italy*, remarkable for identity of sound, in four correspondent closes:—

> "Dov' è, Italia, il tuo braccio? e a che ti *servi*
> Tu dell altrui? Non è, se io scorgo il vero,
> Di chi ti offende il difensor men fero. . .
> Ambi nemici sono: ambi fur *servi*.
> Così dunque l'onor, così con*servi*
> Gli avanzi tu del glorioso impero?
> Così al valor, così al valor primiero
> (Che a te fede giurò) la fede os*servi*?"

"Il nero dio la calda bocca involta
D' ispido pelo a ingordo bacio spinse,
E di stigia fuligin con la folta
Barba l'eburnea gola *e il sen le tinse*."

Does not this describe the devils of our carnival, rather than the majestic brother of Jupiter, at whose side upon asphodel and amaranth the sweet Persephone sits pensively contented, in that deep motionless quiet which mortals pity and which the gods enjoy; rather than him who, under the umbrage of Elysium, gazes at once upon all the beauties that on earth were separated, —Helena and Eriphyle, Polyxena and Hermione, Deidamia and Dcianira, Leda and Omphale, Atalanta and Cydippe, Laodamia, with her arm round the neck of a fond youth whom she still seems afraid of losing, and, apart, the daughters of Niobe[17] clinging to their parent?

Salomon. These images are better than satires; but continue, in preference to other thoughts or pursuits, the noble career you have entered. Be contented, signor Conte, with the glory of our first great dramatist, and neglect altogether any inferior one. Why vex and torment yourself about the French? They buzz and are troublesome while they are swarming; but the master will soon hive them. Is the whole nation worth the worst of your tragedies? All the present race of them, all the creatures in the world which excite your indignation, will lie in the grave, while young and old are clapping their hands or beating their bosoms at your *Bruto Primo*. Consider also that kings and emperors should in your estimation be but as grasshoppers and beetles: let them consume a few blades of your clover without molesting them, without bringing them to crawl on you and claw you. The difference between them and men of genius is almost as great as between men of genius and those higher intelligences who act in immediate subordination to the Almighty. Yes, I assert it, without flattery and without fear, the angels are not higher above mortals than you are above the proudest that trample on them.

Alfieri. I believe, sir, you were the first in commending my tragedies.

[17 First ed. reads: "Niobe, though now in smiles, . . . parent; and many thousands more each of whom is worth the dominions once envied of both brothers. *Salomon*," &c.]

Salomon. He who first praises a good book becomingly is next in merit to the author.

Alfieri. As a writer and as a man I know my station: if I found in the world five equal to myself, I would walk out of it, not to be jostled.

I must now, signor Salomon, take my leave of you; for his Eminence my coachman and their Excellencies my horses are waiting.

XI. ROUSSEAU AND MALESHERBES.[1]

Rousseau. I am ashamed, sir, of my countrymen: let my humiliation expiate their offence. I wish it had not been a minister of the gospel who received you with such inhospitality.

[1 The scene of this Conversation is the village of Motier-Travers, where Rousseau lived for a short time after his sudden departure from France. It was there that he put on the Armenian dress to the bewilderment of his neighbours. With M. de Montmollin, the pastor, he was at first on good terms, but if we may trust Rousseau's own account, in his "Confessions," the publication of the "Lettres de ma Montagne" turned the friendship into persecution. It is not likely that Malesherbes ever travelled so far. He was, however, a friend to Rousseau; and indeed to all the men of letters of the time. He held for some years the post of censor, and used his powers to grant to literature as much irregular freedom as the laws could be strained to permit, and more than was consistent with his office. He lost his life in the Terror, and it is said that he deeply regretted that by any act of his he had opened the way to the Revolution. If he did say so, he failed for once at least in clear-sightedness. Note in 1st ed. reads: "Among the four illustrious victims of the French Revolution, Malesherbes was, I think, the most so. Roland, Lavoisier, Bailly, and he were four such characters as the princes of Europe could not consign to the scaffold or the flames, to banishment or neglect. France seems to have thought herself unable to show her great men, unless the executioner held up their heads. The condemnation of Malesherbes and the coronation of Buonaparte are the two most detestable crimes committed by the French in the whole course of their Revolution. How different the destiny of the best and worst man among them! Never has there been so deplorable a judgment as that by which Malesherbes was sent in his old age, and with his daughter and his grand-daughter, to the scaffold, since the time of Phocion." (Imag. Convers., iii., 1828. Work, si., 1846. Works, iv., 1876.)]

Malesherbes. Nothing can be more ardent and more cordial than the expressions with which you greet me, M. Rousseau, on my return from your lakes and mountains.

Rousseau. If the pastor took you for a courtier, I reverence him for his contemptuousness.

Malesherbes. Why so? Indeed you are in the wrong, my friend. No person has a right to treat another with contemptuousness unless he knows him to deserve it. When a courtier enters the house of a pastor in preference to the next, the pastor should partake in the sentiment that induced him, or at least not be offended to be preferred. A courtier is such at court: in the house of a clergyman he is not a courtier, but a guest. If to be a courtier is offensive, remember that we punish offences where they are committed, where they can be examined, where pleadings can be heard for and against the accused, and where nothing is admitted extraneous from the indictment, excepting what may be adduced in his behalf by witnesses to the general tenor of his character.

Rousseau. Is it really true that the man told you to mount the hay-loft if you wished a night's lodging?

Malesherbes. He did: a certain proof that he no more took me to be a courtier than I took him to be. I accepted his offer, and never slept so soundly. Moderate fatigue, the Alpine air, the blaze of a good fire (for I was admitted to it some moments), and a profusion of odoriferous hay, below which a cow was sleeping, subdued my senses, and protracted my slumbers beyond the usual hour.

Rousseau. You have no right, sir, to be the patron and remunerator of inhospitality. Three or four such men as you would corrupt all Switzerland, and prepare it for the fangs of France and Austria. Kings, like hyenas, will always fall upon dead carcasses, although their bellies are full, and although they are conscious that in the end they will tear one another to pieces over them. Why should you prepare their prey? Were your fire and effulgence given you for this? Why, in short, did you thank this churl? Why did you recommend him to his superiors for preferment on the next vacancy?

Malesherbes. I must adopt your opinion of his behavior in order to answer you satisfactorily. You suppose him inhospit-

able: what milder or more effectual mode of reproving him, than to make every dish at his table admonish him? If he did evil, have I no authority before me which commands me to render him good for it? Believe me, M. Rousseau, the execution of this command is always accompanied by the heart's applause, and opportunities of obedience are more frequent here than anywhere. Would not you exchange resentment for the contrary feeling, even if religion or duty said nothing about the matter? I am afraid the most philosophical of us are sometimes a little perverse, and will not be so happy as they might be, because the path is pointed out to them, and because he who points it out is wise and powerful. Obstinacy and jealousy, the worst parts of childhood and of manhood, have range enough for their ill humors without the heavens.

Rousseau. Sir, I perceive you are among my enemies. I did not think it; for, whatever may be my faults, I am totally free from suspicion.

Malesherbes. And do not think it now, I entreat you, my good friend.

Rousseau. Courts and society have corrupted the best heart in France, and have perverted the best intellect.

Malesherbes. They have done much evil then.

Rousseau. Answer me, and your own conscience: how could you choose to live among the perfidies of Paris and Versailles?

Malesherbes. Lawyers, and advocates in particular, must live there; philosophers need not. If every honest man thought it requisite to leave those cities, would the inhabitants be the better?

Rousseau. You have entered into intimacies with the members of various administrations, opposite in plans and sentiments, but alike hostile to you, and all of whom, if they could have kept your talents down, would have done it. Finding the thing impossible, they ceased to persecute, and would gladly tempt you under the semblance of friendship and esteem to supplicate for some office, that they might indicate to the world your unworthiness by refusing you: a proof, as you know, quite sufficient and self-evident.

Malesherbes. They will never tempt me to supplicate for

any thing but justice, and that in behalf of others. I know nothing of parties. If I am acquainted with two persons of opposite sides in politics, I consider them as you consider a watchmaker and a cabinet-maker: one desires to rise by one way, the other by another. Administrations and systems of government would be quite indifferent to those very functionaries and their opponents, who appear the most zealous partisans, if their fortunes and consequence were not affixed to them. Several of these men seem consistent, and indeed are; the reason is, versatility would loosen and detach from them the public esteem and confidence —

Rousseau. By which their girandoles are lighted, their dinners served, their lacqueys liveried, and their opera-girls vie in benefit-nights. There is no State in Europe where the least wise have not governed the most wise. We find the light and foolish keeping up with the machinery of government easily and leisurely, just as we see butterflies keep up with carriages at full speed. This is owing in both cases to their levity and their position: the stronger and the more active are left behind. I am resolved to prove that farmers-general are the main causes of the defects in our music.

Malesherbes. Prove it, or any thing else, provided that the discussion does not irritate and torment you.

Rousseau. Truth is the object of philosophy.

Malesherbes. Not of philosophers: the display of ingenuity, for the most part, is and always has been it. I must here offer you an opinion of my own, which, if you think well of me, you will pardon, though you should disbelieve its solidity. My opinion then is, that truth is not reasonably the main and ultimate object of philosophy; but that philosophy should seek truth merely as the means of acquiring and of propagating happiness. Truths are simple; wisdom, which is formed by their apposition and application, is concrete: out of this, in its vast varieties, open to our wants and wishes, comes happiness. But the knowledge of all the truths ever yet discovered does not lead immediately to it, nor indeed will ever reach it, unless you make the more important of them bear upon your heart and intellect, and form, as it were, the blood that moves and nurtures them.

Rousseau. I never until now entertained a doubt that truth is

the ultimate aim and object of philosophy: no writer has denied it, I think.

Malesherbes. Designedly none may: but when it is agreed that happiness is the chief good, it must also be agreed that the chief wisdom will pursue it; and I have already said, what your own experience cannot but have pointed out to you, that no truth, or series of truths, hypothetically, can communicate or attain it. Come, M. Rousseau, tell me candidly, do you derive no pleasure from a sense of superiority in genius and independence?

Rousseau. The highest, sir, from a consciousness of independence.

Malesherbes. *Ingenuous* is the epithet we affix to modesty; but modesty often makes men act otherwise than ingenuously: you, for example, now. You are angry at the servility of people, and disgusted at their obtuseness and indifference, on matters of most import to their welfare. If they were equal to you, this anger would cease; but the fire would break out somewhere else, on ground which appears at present sound and level.[2] Voltaire, for instance, is less eloquent than you: but Voltaire is wittier than any man living. This quality—

Rousseau. Is the quality of a buffoon and a courtier. But the buffoon should have most of it, to support his higher dignity.

Malesherbes. Voltaire's is Attic.

Rousseau. If malignity is Attic. Petulance is not wit, although a few grains of wit may be found in petulance; quartz is not gold, although a few grains of gold may be found in quartz. Voltaire is a monkey in mischief, and a spaniel in obsequiousness. He declaims against the cruel and tyrannical; and he kisses the hands of adultresses who murder their husbands, and of robbers who decimate their gang.

Malesherbes. I will not discuss with you the character of the man, and only that part of the author's on which I spoke. There may be malignity in wit, there cannot be violence. You may irritate and disquiet with it; but it must be by means of a flower or a

[2 First ed. reads: "level. You would only be the most eloquent man that ever lived; and even here you would tread upon thorns. Cicero and your neighbour Voltaire are wittier. The latter is more Attic than any Athenian ever was. *Rousseau.* If malignity is Attic. *Malesherbes.* I will not discuss," &c. (14 lines below.)]

feather. Wit and humor stand on one side, irony and sarcasm on the other.

Rousseau. They stand very near.

Malesherbes. So do the Elysian fields and Tartarus.

Rousseau. Pray, go on: teach me to stand quiet in my stall, while my masters and managers pass by.

Malesherbes. Well then,—Pascal argues as closely and methodically; Bossuet is as scientific in the structure of his sentences; Demosthenes, many think, has equal fire, vigor, dexterity: equal selection of topics and equal temperance in treating them, immeasurably as he falls short of you in appeals to the sensibility, and in every thing which by way of excellence we usually call genius.

Rousseau. Sir, I see no resemblance between a pleader at the bar, or a haranguer of the populace, and me.

Malesherbes. Certainly his questions are occasional: but one great question hangs in the centre, and high above the rest; and this is, whether the Mother of liberty and civilization shall exist, or whether she shall be extinguished in the bosom of her family. As we often apply to Eloquence and her parts the terms we apply to Architecture and hers, let me do it also, and remark that nothing can be more simple, solid, and symmetrical, nothing more frugal in decoration or more appropriate in distribution, than the apartments of Demosthenes. Yours excel them in space and altitude; your ornaments are equally chaste and beautiful, with more variety and invention, more airiness and light. But why, among the Loves and Graces, does Apollo flay Marsyas?—and why may not the tiara still cover the ears of Midas? Cannot you, who detest kings and courtiers, keep away from them? If I must be with them, let me be in good humor and good spirits. If I will tread upon a Persian carpet, let it at least be in clean shoes.

As the raciest wine makes the sharpest vinegar, so the richest fancies turn the most readily to acrimony. Keep yours, my dear M. Rousseau, from the exposure and heats that generate it. Be contented; enjoy your fine imagination; and do not throw your salad out of window, nor shove your cat off your knee, on hearing it said that Shakspeare has a finer, or that a minister is of opinion that you know more of music than of state. My friend! the quarrels of ingenious men are generally far less reasonable and just, less placable and moderate, than those of the stupid and ignorant.

We ought to blush at this: and we should blush yet more deeply if we bring them in as parties to our differences. Let us conquer by kindness; which we cannot do easily or well without communication. Our[3] antipathies ought to be against the vices of men, and not against their opinions. If their opinions are widely different from ours, their vices ought to render them more dissimilar to us. Yet the opinions instigate us to hostility; the vices are snatched at with avidity, as rich materials to adorn our triumph.

Rousseau. This is sophistry; and at best is applicable only to the malicious. At a moment when truth is penetrating the castle of the powerful, and when freedom looks into the window of the poor, there are writers who would draw them back and confine them to their own libraries and theatres.

Malesherbes. Whether they proceed from the shelf or from the stage, generous sentiments are prevalent among us; and the steps both of truth and freedom are not the less rapid or the less firm because they advance in silence. Montesquieu has rendered them greater and more lasting service, than the fiercest anabaptist in Munster.

Rousseau. Many read him, some are pleased with him, few are instructed by him, none are guided. His *Lettres Persanes* are light and lively. His *Temple de Guide* is Parisian from the steps to the roof; there is but little imagination in it, and no warmth. There is more of fancy in his *Esprit des Lois*, of which the title-page would be much correcter with only the first word than with all three. He twitches me by the coat, turns me round, and is gone.

Malesherbes. Concise he certainly is, but he also is acute.

Rousseau. How far does his acuteness penetrate? A pin can pierce no deeper than to its head. He would persuade men that, if patriotism is the growth of republics, honor is the growth of monarchies. I would say it without offence, but say it I will, that honor is feeble and almost extinct in every ancient kingdom. In Spain it flourished more vigorously than in any other: pray, how much is left there? And what addition was made to it when the Bourbon crossed the Bidassoa? One vile family is sufficient to debase a whole nation. Voltaire, perhaps as honest and

[3 From "Our" to "them" (121 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

certainly as clear-sighted a man as any about the Tuileries, called Louis XV. *Titus.* Is this honor? If it be, pray show me the distinction between that quality and truth. As I cannot think a liar honorable, I cannot think a lie honor. Gentlemen at court would rather give their lives than be *called* what they would scarcely give a *denier* not to *be*. Readiness to display courage is not honor, though it is what Montesquieu mistakes for it. Surely he might have praised his country for something better than this fantastic foolery, which, like hair-powder, requires a mask to be worn by those who put it on. He might have said, justly and proudly, that while others cling to a city, to a faction, to a family, the French in all their fortunes cling to France.

Malesherbes. Gratify me, I entreat you, by giving me your idea of honor.

Rousseau. The image stands before me, substantially and vigorously alive. Justice, generosity, delicacy, are the three Graces that formed his mind. Propriety of speech, clearness, firmness—

Malesherbes. Repress this enthusiasm. If you are known to have made me blush, you ruin me for ever in my profession.

Rousseau. Look, then, across the narrow sea. When Edward the Black Prince made your king his prisoner, he reverenced his age, his station, his misfortunes; attending him, serving him, consoling him, like a son. Many of your countrymen who were then living lived to see the tide of victory turn, and the conquerors led into captivity. Talbot, whose name alone held provinces back from rebellion, was betrayed and taken, and loaded with indignities.

Malesherbes. Attribute it to the times. The English were as cruel to fallen valor in the person of Jeanne d'Arc.

Rousseau. There neither the genius of the nation nor the spirit of the times is reproachable, but the genius and spirit of fanaticism, which is violent and blind in all alike. Jeanne d'Arc was believed to be a sorceress, and was condemned to death for it by the ecclesiastical judges of each nation. Nothing but the full belief of the English, that she was under the guidance of an invisible and evil power, would have turned to flight those Saxo-Normans who never yielded to the Franco-Gauls when there were only three against one; no, not once in the incessant

contest during three hundred years, which ended in the utter subjugation of your country. As the French acknowledged her to be the inspired of God, they fancied there was no danger in following her: as the English thought her instigated by the Devil, they felt the insufficiency of human force in opposing her. Wherever she was not, the field was covered with French bodies, as before; wherever she was, it was covered with English, as it never had been until then. Had Jeanne d'Arc been born in England and fought for England, the people at this hour, although no longer slaves to idolatry, would almost worship her: every year would her festival be kept in every village of the land. But in France not a hymn is chanted to her, not a curl of incense is wafted, not a taper is lighted, not a daisy, not a rush, is strewn upon the ground throughout the whole kingdom she rescued. Instead of which, a shirt-airer to a libidinous king,—a ribald poet, a piebald of tragedy and comedy, a contemner alike of purity and patriotism, — throws his filth against her mutilated features. Meanwhile an edifice is being erected in your city to the glory of Geneviève, which will exhaust the fortunes and almost the maledictions of the people.

Malesherbes. We certainly are not the most grateful of nations.

Rousseau. You must be, before you pretend to be the most honorable.

Malesherbes. I hope our gratitude in future will be excited by something better than the instruments of war. The nation is growing more civilized and humane: the young have never lapped blood.

Rousseau. I prefer the vices of the present king to the glories of his predecessor: I prefer a swine to a panther, and the outer side of the stye or grating to the inner.

Malesherbes. You, being a philanthropist, must rejoice that our reigning prince abstains from the field of battle.

Rousseau. Unless he did, he could not continue to give a thousand louis daily for the young maidens brought to him. A prodigal man is a thoughtless man; a prodigal prince is a thoughtless robber. Your country endures enough without war. But oppression and valor, like Voltaire's fever and quinquina, grow far apart.

Malesherbes. What! and are not our people brave?

Rousseau. I call those brave, and those only, who rise up simultaneously against the first indignity offered by their administrators, and who remove, without pause and without parley, trunk, root, and branch.

Malesherbes. As we cannot change at once the whole fabric of government, let us be attentive to the unsounder parts, and recommend the readiest and safest method of repairing them.

Rousseau. The minister would expel me from his antechamber, and order his valets to buffet me, if I offered him any proposal for the advantage of mankind.

Malesherbes. Call to him then from this room, where the valets are civiler. Nature has given you a speaking-trumpet, which neither storm can drown nor enemy can silence. If you esteem him, instruct him; if you despise him, do the same. Surely, you who have much benevolence would not despise any one willingly or unnecessarily. Contempt is for the incorrigible: now, where upon earth is he whom your genius, if rightly and temperately exerted, would not influence and correct?

I never was more flattered or honored than by your patience in listening to me. Consider me as an old woman who sits by the bedside in your infirmity, who brings you no savory viand, no exotic fruit, but a basin of whey or a basket of strawberries from your native hills; assures you that what oppressed you was a dream, occasioned by the wrong position in which you lay; opens the window, gives you fresh air, and entreats you to recollect the features of Nature, and to observe (which no man ever did so accurately) their beauty. In your politics you cut down a forest to make a toothpick, and cannot make even that out of it! Do not let us in jurisprudence be like critics in the classics, and change whatever can be changed, right or wrong. No statesman will take your advice. Supposing that any one is liberal in his sentiments and clear-sighted in his views, nevertheless love of power is jealous, and he would rejoice to see you fleeing from persecution or turning to meet it. The very men whom you would benefit will treat you worse. As the ministers of kings wish their masters to possess absolute power that the exercise of it may be delegated to them, which it naturally is from the violence and sloth alternate with despots as with wild beasts, and

that they may apprehend no check or control from those who discover their misdemeanors, in like manner the people places more trust in favor than in fortune, and hopes to obtain by subserviency what it never might by election or by chance. Else in free governments, so some are called (for names once given are the last things lost), all minor offices and employments would be assigned by ballot. Each province or canton would present a list annually of such persons in it as are worthy to occupy the local administrations.

To avoid any allusion to the country in which we live, let us take England for example. Is it not absurd, iniquitous, and revolting, that the minister of a church in Yorkshire should be appointed by a lawyer in London, who never knew him, never saw him, never heard from a single one of the parishioners a recommendation of any kind?[4] Is it not more reasonable that a justice of the peace should be chosen by those who have always been witnesses of his equity?

Rousseau. The English in former days insisted more firmly and urgently on improving their Constitution than they have ever done since. In the reign of Edward III. they claimed the nomination of the chancellor. And surely, if any nomination of any functionary is left to the people, it should be this. It is somewhat like the tribunitial power among the Romans, and is the only one which can intercede in a conciliatory way between the prince and people. Exclusively of this one office in the higher posts of government, the king should appoint his ministers, and should invest them with power and splendor; but those ministers should not appoint to any civil or religious place of trust or profit which the community could manifestly fill better. The greater part of offices and dignities should be conferred for a short and stated time, that all might hope to attain and strive to deserve them. Embassies in particular should never exceed one year in Europe, nor consulates two. To the latter office I assign this duration as the more difficult to fulfil properly, from requiring a knowledge of trade although a slight one, and because those who possess any such knowledge are inclined for the greater

[4 First ed. reads: "kind, or a syllable in his favour. Is it not more reasonable that a collector of taxes or a justice," &c. Two lines below, from "*Rousseau*" to "government" (9 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

part to turn it to their own account, which a consul ought by no means to do. Frequent [5] election of representatives and of civil officers in the subordinate employments would remove most causes of discontent in the people, and of instability in kingly power. Here is a lottery in which every one is sure of a prize, if not for himself, at least for somebody in his family or among his friends; and the ticket would be fairly paid for out of the taxes.

Malesherbes. So it appears to me. What other system can present so obviously to the great mass of the people the two principal piers and buttresses of government, tangible interest and reasonable hope? No danger of any kind can arise from it, no antipathies, no divisions, no imposture of demagogues, no caprice of despots. On the contrary, many and great advantages in places which at the first survey do not appear to border on it. At present, the best of the English juridical institutions, that of justices of the peace, is viewed with diffidence and distrust. Elected as they would be, and increased in number, the whole judicature, civil and criminal, might be confided to them, and their labors be not only not aggravated but diminished. Suppose them in four divisions to meet at four places in every county once in twenty[6] days and to possess the power of imposing a fine not exceeding two hundred francs on every cause implying oppression, and one not exceeding fifty on such as they should unanimously declare frivolous.

Rousseau. Few would become attorneys, and those from among the indigent.

Malesherbes. Almost the greatest evil that exists in the world, moral or physical, would be removed. A second appeal might be made in the following session; a third could only come before Parliament, and this alone by means of attorneys, the number of whom altogether would not exceed the number of coroners; for in England there are as many who cut their own throats as who would cut their own purses.

Rousseau. The famous *trial by jury* would cease: this would disgust the English.

Malesherbes. The number of justices would be much augmented: nearly all those who now are jurymen would enjoy this rank and

[5] First ed. reads: "do. *Rousseau.* Frequent," &c.]
[6] First ed. reads: "in ten days."]

dignity, and would be flattered by sitting on the same bench with the first gentlemen of the land.

Rousseau. What number would sit ?

Malesherbes. Three or five in the first instance ; five or seven in the second,—as the number of causes should permit.

Rousseau. The laws of England are extremely intricate and perplexed : such men would be puzzled.

Malesherbes. Such men having no interest in the perplexity, but on the contrary an interest in unravelling it, would see such laws corrected. Intricate as they are, questions on those which are the most so are usually referred by the judges themselves to private arbitration ; of which my plan, I conceive, has all the advantages, united to those of open and free discussion among men of unperverted sense, and unbiassed by professional hopes and interests. The different courts of law in England cost about seventy millions of francs annually. On my system, the justices or judges would receive five-and-twenty francs daily ; as the *special jurymen* do now, without any sense of shame or impropriety, however rich they may be : such being the established practice.

Rousseau. Seventy millions ! seventy millions !

Malesherbes. There are attorneys and conveyancers in London who gain one hundred thousand francs a year, and advocates more. The chancellor—

Rousseau. The Celeno of these harpies—

Malesherbes. Nets above one million, and is greatly more than an archbishop in the church, scattering preferment in Cumberland and Cornwall from his bench at Westminster.

Rousseau. Absurdities and enormities are great in proportion to custom or insuetude. If we had lived from childhood with a *boa constrictor*, we should think it no more a monster than a canary-bird. The sum you mentioned, of seventy millions, is incredible.

Malesherbes. In this estimate the expense of letters by the post, and of journeys made by the parties, is not and cannot be included.

Rousseau. The whole machine of government, civil and religious, ought never to bear upon the people with a weight so oppressive. I do not add the national defence, which being

principally naval is more costly, nor institutions for the promotion of the arts, which in a country like England ought to be liberal. But such an expenditure should nearly suffice for these also, in time of peace. Religion and law indeed should cost nothing: at present the one hangs property, the other quarters it. I am confounded at the profusion. I doubt whether the Romans expended so much in that year's war which dissolved the Carthaginian empire, and left them masters of the universe. What is certain, and what is better, it did not cost a tenth of it to colonize Pennsylvania, in whose forests the cradle of freedom is suspended, and where the eye of philanthropy, tired with tears and vigils, may wander and may rest. Your system, or rather your arrangement of one already established, pleases me. Ministers would only lose thereby that portion of their possessions which they give away to needy relatives, unworthy dependents, or the requisite supporters of their authority and power.

Malesherbes. On this plan, no such supporters would be necessary, no such dependents could exist, and no such relatives could be disappointed. Beside, the conflicts of their opponents must be periodical, weak, and irregular.

Rousseau. The[7] craving for the rich carrion would be less keen; the zeal of opposition, as usual, would be measured by the stomach, whereon hope and overlooking have always a strong influence.

Malesherbes. My excellent friend, do not be offended with me for an ingenious and frank confession: promise me your pardon.

Rousseau. You need none.

Malesherbes. Promise it, nevertheless.

Rousseau. You have said nothing, done nothing, which could in any way displease me.

Malesherbes. You grant me then a bill of indemnity for what I may have undertaken with a good intention since we have been together?

[7 First ed. reads: "*Rousseau.* The country would be at worst, but as one Prometheus to one vulture, and there being no instruments at hand no voices under the rock, to drive him off, the craving . . . influence The meaning of the word *ambition*, which few understand even now, and which many have an interest in misinterpreting, must after a time be sought for in the dictionary. *Malesherbes.* My excellent," &c.]

Rousseau. Willingly.

Malesherbes. I fell into your views, I walked along with you side by side, merely to occupy your mind, which I perceived was agitated.

Rousseau.[8] In other words, to betray me. I had begun to imagine there was one man in the universe not my enemy.

Malesherbes. There are many, my dear M. Rousseau! yes, even in France and England; to say nothing of the remoter regions on each side of the equator, discovered and undiscovered. Be reasonable, be just.

Rousseau. I am the only man who is either. What would you say more?

Malesherbes. Perhaps I would even say less. You are fond of discoursing on the visionary and hypothetical: I usually avoid it.

Rousseau. Pray why, sir?

Malesherbes. Because it renders us more and more discontented with the condition in which Divine Providence hath placed us. We can hope to remove but a small portion of the evils that encompass us; there being many men to whom these are no evils at all, and such having the management of our concerns, and keeping us under them as tightly as the old man kept Sinbad.

Rousseau. I would teach them that what are evils to us are evils to them likewise, and heavier and more dangerous. The rash, impetuous rider, or (to adopt your allusion) the intolerably heavy one, is more liable to break his bones by a fall than the animal he has mounted. Sooner or later the cloud of tyranny bursts; and fortunes, piled up inordinately and immeasureably, not only are scattered and lost, but first overwhelm the occupier. We, like metallic blocks, are hardened by the repetition of the blows that flatten us, and every part of us touching the ground, we cannot fall lower: the hammerers, once fallen, are annihilated.

Your remarks, although inapplicable to the Continent, are applicable to England; and several of them, however they may

[8 From "*Rousseau*" to "*Malesherbes*" (48 lines) added in 2nd ed. First ed. reads: "agitated. You are fond of discoursing on these matters; I dislike it. For compliance," &c.]

be pecked, scratched, and kicked about by the pullets fattening in the darkened chambers of Parliament, are worthy of being weighed by the people, loath as may be ministers of state to employ the scales of Justice on any such occasion. But if the steadier hand refuses to perform its functions, the stronger may usurp them.

Malesherbes. Nothing more probable. Often the worst evil of bad government is not in its action but its counteraction.

Rousseau. Is it possible to doubt at what country you now are pointing? I cannot see then why you should have treated me like a driveller.

Malesherbes. How so, my friend,—how so?

Rousseau. To say the least, why you should believe me indifferent to the welfare of your country, to the dictates of humanity, to the improvement of the species.

Malesherbes. In compliance with your humor, to engage your fancy, to divert it awhile from Switzerland,[9] by which you appear and partly on my account to be offended, I began with reflections upon England: I raised up another cloud in the region of them, light enough to be fantastic and diaphanous, and to catch some little irradiation from its western sun. Do not run after it farther; it has vanished already. Consider: the three great nations—

Rousseau. Pray, which are those?

Malesherbes. I cannot in conscience give the palm to the Hottentots, the Greenlanders, or the Hurons: I meant to designate those who united to empire the most social virtue and civil freedom. Athens, Rome, and England have received on the subject of government elaborate treatises for their greatest men. You have reasoned more dispassionately and profoundly on it than Plato has done, or probably than Cicero, led away as he often is by the authority of those who are inferior to himself: but do you excel Aristoteles in calm and patient investigation? Or, think you, are your reading and range of thought more extensive than Harrington's and Milton's? Yet what effect have the political works of these marvellous men produced upon the world?—What effect upon any one State, any one city, any one hamlet? A clerk in office, an accountant, a gauger

[9 First ed. reads: "Switzerland and France, I raised up," &c.]

of small-beer, a song-writer for a tavern dinner, produces more. He thrusts his rags into the hole whence the wind comes, and sleeps soundly. While you and I are talking about elevations and proportions, pillars and pilasters, architraves and friezes, the buildings we should repair are falling to the earth, and the materials for their restoration are in the quarry.

Rousseau. I could answer you: but my mind has certain moments of repose, or rather of oscillation, which I would not for the world disturb. Music, eloquence, friendship, bring and prolong them.

Malesherbes. Enjoy them, my dear friend, and convert them if possible to months and years. It is as much at your arbitration on what theme you shall meditate, as in what meadow you shall botanize; and you have as much at your option the choice of your thoughts, as of the keys in your harpsichord.

Rousseau. If this were true, who could be unhappy?

Malesherbes. Those of whom it is not true. Those who from want of practice cannot manage their thoughts, who have few to select from, and who, because of their sloth or of their weakness, do not roll away the heaviest from before them.

XII. JOSEPH SCALIGER AND MONTAIGNE.[1]

Montaigne. What could have brought you, M. de l'Escale, to visit the old man of the mountain, other than a good heart? Oh how delighted and charmed I am to hear you speak such excellent Gascon.* You rise early, I see: you must have risen with the sun, to be here at this hour; it is a stout half-hour's walk from the brook. I have capital white wine, and the best cheese in Auvergne. You saw the goats and the two cows before the castle.

Pierre, thou hast done well: set it upon the table, and tell

[1 Imag. Convers., iii., 1828. Works, i., 1846. Works, iv., 1876.]

* "Ma mère était fort éloquente en Gascon."—*Scaligerana*, p. 232.

Master Matthew to split a couple of chickens and broil them, and to pepper but one. Do you like pepper, M. de l'Escale?

Scaliger. Not much.

Montaigne. Hold hard! let the pepper alone: I hate it. Tell him to broil plenty of ham; only two slices at a time, upon his salvation.

Scaliger. This, I perceive, is the antechamber to your library: here are your every-day books.

Montaigne. Faith! I have no other. These are plenty, methinks; is not that your opinion?

Scaliger. You have great resources within yourself, and therefore can do with fewer.

Montaigne. Why, how many now do you think here may be?

Scaliger. I did not believe at first that there could be above fourscore.

Montaigne. Well! are fourscore few?—are we talking of peas and beans?

Scaliger. I and my father (put together) have written well-nigh as many.

Montaigne. Ah! to write them is quite another thing: but one reads books without a spur, or even a pat from our Lady Vanity. How do you like my wine?—it comes from the little knoll yonder: you cannot see the vines, those chestnut-trees are between.

Scaliger. The wine is excellent; light, odoriferous, with a smartness like a sharp child's prattle.

Montaigne. It never goes to the head, nor pulls the nerves, which many do as if they were guitar-strings. I drink a couple of bottles a-day, winter and summer, and never am the worse for it. You gentlemen of the Agennois have better in your province, and indeed the very best under the sun. I do not wonder that the Parliament of Bordeaux should be jealous of their privileges, and call it Bordeaux.[2] Now, if you prefer your own country wine, only say it: I have several bottles in my cellar, with corks as long as rapiers, and as polished. I do not know, M. de l'Escale, whether you are particular in these matters: not quite, I should imagine, so great a judge in them as in others?

[2 First ed. reads: "Bordeaux wine. All privileges are unjust; this as bad as any now," &c.]

Scaliger. I know three things, — wine, poetry, and the world.*

Montaigne. You know one too many, then. I hardly know whether I know any thing about poetry; for I like Clem Marot better than Ronsard. Ronsard is so plaguily stiff and stately, where there is no occasion for it; I verily do think the man must have slept with his wife in a cuirass.

Scaliger.[3] He had no wife: he was an *abbé* at Tours.

Montaigne. True, true; being an abbé he could never have one, and never want one; particularly at Tours, where the women profess an especial calling and most devotional turn for the religious.

Scaliger. It pleases me greatly that you like Marot. His version of the *Psalms* is lately set to music, and added to the *New Testament*, of Geneva.

Montaigne. It is putting a slice of honeycomb into a barrel of vinegar, which will never grow the sweeter for it.

Scaliger. Surely, you do not think in this fashion of the *New Testament!*

Montaigne. Who supposes it? Whatever is mild and kindly is there. But Jack Calvin has thrown bird-lime and vitriol upon it, and whoever but touches the cover dirties his fingers or burns them.

Scaliger. Calvin is a very great man, I do assure you, M. de Montaigne.

Montaigne. I do not like your very great men who beckon me to them, call me their begotten, their dear child, and their entrails; and, if I happen to say on any occasion, "I beg leave, sir, to dissent a little from you," stamp and cry, "The devil you do!" and whistle to the executioner.

Scaliger. You exaggerate, my worthy friend!

Montaigne. Exaggerate do I, M. de l'Escale? What was it he did the other day to the poor devil there with an odd name? —Melancthon, I think it is.

Scaliger. I do not know: I have received no intelligence of late from Geneva.

* "Je me connais en trois choses, *non in aliis, in vino, poesi, et juger des personnes.*"— *Scaligerana*, p. 232.

[3 From "*Scaliger*" to "religious" (4 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

Montaigne. It was but last night that our curate rode over from Lyons (he made two days of it, as you may suppose) and supped with me. He told me that Jack had got his old friend hanged and burned. I could not join him in the joke, for I find none such in the *New Testament*, on which he would have founded it; and, if it is one, it is not in my manner or to my taste.

Scaliger. I cannot well believe the report, my dear sir. He was rather urgent, indeed, on the combustion of the heretic Michael Servetus some years past.

Montaigne. A thousand to one, my spiritual guide mistook the name He has heard of both, I warrant him, and thinks in his conscience that either is as good a roast as the other.

Scaliger. Theologians are proud and intolerant, and truly the farthest of all men from theology, if theology means the rational sense of religion, or indeed has any thing to do with it in any way. Melancthon was the very best of the reformers; quiet, sedate, charitable, intrepid, firm in friendship, ardent in faith, acute in argument, and profound in learning.

Montaigne. Who cares about his argumentation or his learning, if he was the rest?

Scaliger. I hope you will suspend your judgment on this affair, until you receive some more certain and positive information.

Montaigne. I can believe it of the Sieur Calvin.

Scaliger. I cannot. John Calvin is a grave man, orderly and reasonable.

Montaigne. In my opinion he has not the order nor the reason of my cook. Mat never took a man for a sucking-pig, cleaning and scraping and buttering and roasting him; nor ever twitched God by the sleeve and swore he should not have his own way.

Scaliger. M. de Montaigne, have you ever studied the doctrine of predestination?

Montaigne. I should not understand it, if I had; and I would not break through an old fence merely to get into a cavern. I would not give a fig or a fig-leaf to know the truth of it, as far as any man can teach it me. Would it make me honester or happier, or, in other things, wiser?

Scaliger. I do not know whether it would materially.

Montaigne. I should be an egregious fool then to care about it. Our disputes on controverted points have filled the country with missionaries and cut-throats. Both parties have shown a disposition to turn this comfortable old house of mine into a fortress. If I had inclined to either, the other would have done it. Come walk about it with me; after a ride, you can do nothing better to take off fatigue.

Scaliger. A most spacious kitchen!

Montaigne. Look up!

Scaliger. You have twenty or more flitches of bacon hanging there.

Montaigne. And if I had been a doctor or a captain, I should have had a cobweb and predestination in the place of them. Your soldiers of the *religion* on the one side, and of the *good old faith* on the other, would not have left unto me safe and sound even that good old woman there.

Scaliger. Oh yes they would, I hope.

Old Woman. Why dost giggle, Mat? What should he know about the business? He speaks mighty bad French, and is as spiteful as the devil. Praised be God, we have a kind master, who thinks about us, and feels for us.

Scaliger. Upon my word, M. de Montaigne, this gallery is an interesting one.

Montaigne. I can show you nothing but my house and my dairy. We have no chase in the month of May, you know,—unless you would like to bait the badger in the stable. This is rare sport in rainy days.

Scaliger. Are you in earnest, M. de Montaigne?

Montaigne. No, no, no, I cannot afford to worry him outright: only a little for pastime,—a morning's merriment for the dogs and wenches.

Scaliger. You really are then of so happy a temperament that, at your time of life, you can be amused by baiting a badger!

Montaigne. Why not? Your father, a wiser and graver and older man than I am, was amused by baiting a professor or critic. I have not a dog in the kennel that would treat the badger worse than brave Julius treated Cardan and Erasmus, and some dozens more. We are all childish, old as well as young; and our very last tooth would fain stick, M. de l'Escale, in some tender place

of a neighbor. Boys laugh at a person who falls in the dirt; men laugh rather when they make him fall, and most when the dirt is of their own laying.

Is not the gallery rather cold, after the kitchen? We must go through it to get into the court where I keep my tame rabbits; the stable is hard by: come along, come along.

Scaliger. Permit me to look a little at those banners. Some of them are old indeed.

Montaigne. Upon my word, I blush to think I never took notice how they are tattered. I have no fewer than three women in the house, and in a summer's evening, only two hours long, the worst of these rags might have been darned across.

Scaliger. You would not have done it surely!

Montaigne. I am not over-thrifty: the women might have been better employed. It is as well as it is then; ay?

Scaliger. I think so.

Montaigne. So be it.

Scaliger. They remind me of my own family, we being descended from the great Cane della Scala, Prince of Verona, and from the House of Hapsburg,* as you must have heard from my father.

Montaigne. What signifies it to the world whether the great Cane was tied to his grandmother or not? As for the House of Hapsburg, if you could put together as many such houses as would make up a city larger than Cairo, they would not be worth his study, or a sheet of paper on the table of it.

XIII. BOCCACCIO AND PETRARCA.[1]

Boccacccio. Remaining among us, I doubt not that you would soon receive the same distinctions in your native country as others

* "Descendimus ex filiâ Comitis Hapsburgensis."—*Scaligerana*, p. 231.

[1] This and the following Conversation were preparatory studies for the larger work in which Landor afterwards dealt with these two men. (Imag. Convers., iv., 1829. Works, i., 1846. Works, iv., 1876).]

have conferred upon you: indeed, in confidence I may promise it. For greatly are the Florentines ashamed that the most elegant of their writers and the most independent of their citizens lives in exile, by the injustice he had suffered in the detriment done to his property, through the intemperate administration of their laws.

Petrarca. Let them recall me soon and honorably: then perhaps I may assist them to remove their ignominy, which I carry about with me wherever I go, and which is pointed out by my exotic laurel.

Boccaccio. There is, and ever will be, in all countries and under all governments, an ostracism for their greatest men.

Petrarca. At present we will talk no more about it. To-morrow I pursue my journey toward Padua, where I am expected; where some few value and esteem me, honest and learned and ingenious men; although neither those Transpadane regions, nor whatever extends beyond them, have yet produced an equal to Boccaccio.

Boccaccio. Then, in the name of friendship, do not go thither! —form such rather from your fellow citizens. I love my equals heartily; and shall love them the better when I see them raised up here, from our own mother earth, by you.

Petrarca. Let us continue our walk.

Boccaccio. If you have been delighted (and you say you have been) at seeing again, after so long an absence, the house and garden wherein I have placed the relaters of my stories, as reported in the *Decameron*, come a little way further up the ascent, and we will pass through the vineyard on the west of the villa. You will see presently another on the right, lying in its warm little garden close to the roadside, the scene lately of somewhat that would have looked well, as illustration, in the midst of your Latin reflections. It shows us that people the most serious and determined may act at last contrariwise to the line of conduct they have laid down.

Petrarca. Relate it to me, Messer Giovanni; for you are able to give reality the merits and charms of fiction, just as easily as you give fiction the semblance, the stature, and the movement of reality.

Boccaccio. I must here forego such powers, if in good truth I possess them.

Petrarca. This long green alley, defended by box and cypresses, is very pleasant. The smell of box, although not sweet, is more agreeable to me than many that are; I cannot say from what resuscitation of early and tender feeling. The [2] cypress too seems to strengthen the nerves of the brain. Indeed, I delight in the odor of most trees and plants.

Will not that dog hurt us?—he comes closer.

Boccaccio. Dog! thou hast the colors of a magpie and the tongue of one; prythee be quiet: art thou not ashamed?

Petrarca. Verily he trots off, comforting his angry belly with his plenteous tail, flattened and bestrewn under it. He looks back, going on, and puffs out his upper lip without a bark.

Boccaccio. These creatures are more accessible to temperate and just rebuke than the creatures of our species, usually angry with less reason, and from no sense, as dogs are, of duty. Look into that white arcade! Surely it was white the other day; and now I perceive it is still so: the setting sun tinges it with yellow.

Petrarca. The house has nothing of either the rustic or the magnificent about it; nothing quite regular, nothing much varied. If there is anything at all affecting, as I fear there is, in the story you are about to tell me, I could wish the edifice itself bore externally some little of the interesting that I might hereafter turn my mind toward it, looking out of the catastrophe, though not away from it. But I do not even find the peculiar and uncostly decoration of our Tuscan villas: the central turret, round which the kite perpetually circles in search of pigeons or smaller prey, borne onward, like the Flemish skater, by effortless will in motionless progression. The view of Fiesole must be lovely from that window; but I fancy to myself it loses the cascade under the single high arch of the Mugnone.

Boccaccio. I think so. In this villa,—come rather further off: the inhabitants of it may hear us, if they should happen to be in the arbor, as most people are at the present hour of day,—in this villa, Messer Francesco, lives Monna Tita Monalda, who tenderly loved Amadeo degli Oricellaria. She however was reserved and coy; and Father Pietro de' Pucci, an enemy to the family of Amadeo, told her never more to think of him, for that,

[2 From "The" to "plants" (3 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

just before he knew her, he had thrown his arm round the neck of Nunciata Righi, his mother's maid, calling her most immodestly a sweet creature, and of a whiteness that marble would split with envy at.

Monna Tita trembled and turned pale. "Father is the girl really so very fair?" said she anxiously.

"Madonna," replied the father, "after confession she is not much amiss: white she is, with a certain tint of pink not belonging to her, but coming over her as through the wing of an angel pleased at the holy function; and her breath is such, the very ear smells it: poor, innocent, sinful soul! Hei! The wretch, Amadeo, would have endangered her salvation."

"She must be a wicked girl to let him," said Monna Tita. "A young man of good parentage and education would not dare to do such a thing, of his own accord. I will see him no more however. But it was before he knew me: and it may not be true. I cannot think any young woman would let a young man do so, even in the last hour before Lent. Now in what month was it supposed to be?"

"Supposed to be!" cried the father indignantly: "in June; I say in June."

"Oh! that now is quite impossible: for on the second of July, forty-one days from this, and at this very hour of it, he swore to me eternal love and constancy. I will inquire of him whether it is true: I will charge him with it."

She did. Amadeo confessed his fault, and, thinking it a venial one, would have taken and kissed her hand as he asked forgiveness.

Petrarca. Children! children! I will go into the house, and if their relatives, as I suppose, have approved of the marriage, I will endeavor to persuade the young lady that a fault like this, on the repentance of her lover, is not unpardonable. But first, is Amadeo a young man of loose habits?

Boccaccio. Less than our others: in fact, I never heard of any deviation, excepting this.

Petrarca. Come then with me.

Boccaccio. Wait a little.

Petrarca. I hope the modest Tita after a trial, will not be too severe with him.

Boccaccio. Severity is far from her nature; but, such is her purity and innocence, she shed many and bitter tears at his confession, and declared her unalterable determination of taking the veil among the nuns of Fiesole. Amadeo fell at her feet, and wept upon them. She pushed him from her gently, and told him she would still love him, if he would follow her example, leave the world, and become a friar of San Marco. Amadeo was speechless; and, if he had not been so, he never would have made a promise he intended to violate. She retired from him: after a time he arose, less wounded than benumbed by the sharp uncovered stones in the garden walk; and, as a man who fears to fall from a precipice goes farther from it than is necessary, so did Amadeo shun the quarter where the gate is, and, oppressed by his agony and despair, throw his arms across the sun-dial and rest his brow upon it, hot as it must have been on a cloudless day in August. When the evening was about to close, he was aroused by the cries of rooks over-head; they flew toward Florence, and beyond: he too went back into the city.

Tita fell sick from her inquietude. Every morning ere sunrise did Amadeo return; but could hear only from the laborers in the field that Monna Tita was ill, because she had promised to take the veil and had not taken it, knowing, as she must do, that the heavenly bridegroom is a bridegroom never to be trifled with, let the spouse be young and beautiful as she may be. Amadeo had often conversed with the peasant of the farm, who much pitied so worthy and loving a gentleman; and, finding him one evening fixing some thick and high stakes in the ground, offered to help him. After due thanks, "It is time," said the peasant, "to rebuild the hovel and watch the grapes."

He went into the stable, collected the old pillars of his autumnal observatory, drove them into the ground, and threw the matting over them.

"This is my house," cried he. "Could I never, in my stupidity, think about rebuilding it before? Bring me another mat or two: I will sleep here to-night, to-morrow night, every night, all autumn, all winter."

He slept there, and was consoled at last by hearing that Monna Tita was out of danger, and recovering from her illness by spiritual means. His heart grew lighter day after day. Every evening

did he observe the rooks, in the same order, pass along the same track in the heavens, just over San Marco : and it now occurred to him, after three weeks indeed, that Monna Tita had perhaps some strange idea, in choosing his monastery, not unconnected with the passage of these birds. He grew calmer upon it, until he asked himself whether he might hope. In the midst of this half-meditation, half-dream, his whole frame was shaken by the voices, however low and gentle, of two monks coming from the villa and approaching him. He would have concealed himself under this bank whereon we are standing ; but they saw him and called him by name. He now perceived that the younger of them was Guiberto Oddi, with whom he had been at school about six or seven years ago, and who admired him for his courage and frankness when he was almost a child.

"Do not let us mortify poor Amadeo," said Guiberto to his companion. "Return to the road : I will speak a few words to him, and engage him (I trust) to comply with reason and yield to necessity." The elder monk, who saw he should have to climb the hill again, assented to the proposal, and went into the road. After the first embraces and few words, "Amadeo ! Amadeo ! " said Guiberto, "it was love that made me a friar ; let any thing else make you one."

"Kind heart ! " replied Amadeo. "If death or religion, or hatred of me, deprives me of Tita Monalda, I will die, where she commanded me, in the cowl. It is you who prepare her then to throw away her life and mine ! "

"Hold ! Amadeo ! " said Guiberto, "I officiate together with good Father Fontesecco, who invariably falls asleep amid our holy function."

Now, Messer Francesco, I must inform you that Father Fontesecco has the heart of a flower. It feels nothing, it wants nothing ; it is pure and simple, and full of its own little light. Innocent as a child, as an angel, nothing ever troubled him but how to devise what he should confess. A confession costs him more trouble to invent than any Giornata in my *Decameron* cost me. He was once overheard to say on this occasion, "God forgive me in his infinite mercy, for making it appear that I am a little worse than he has chosen I should be ! " He is temperate ; for he never drinks more than exactly half the wine

and water set before him. In fact, he drinks the wine and leaves the water, saying, "We have the same water up at San Domenico; we send it hither: it would be uncivil to take back our own gift, and still more to leave a suspicion that we thought other people's wine poor beverage." Being afflicted by the gravel, the physician of his convent advised him, as he never was fond of wine, to leave it off entirely; on which he said, "I know few things; but this I know well: in water there is often gravel, in wine never. It hath pleased God to afflict me, and even to go a little out of his way in order to do it, for the greater warning to other sinners. I will drink wine, brother Anselmini, and help his work."

I have led you away from the younger monk.

"While Father Fontesecco is in the first stage of beatitude, chanting through his nose the benedicite, I will attempt," said Guiberto, "to comfort Monna Tita."

"Good, blessed Guiberto!" exclaimed Amadeo in a transport of gratitude, at which Guiberto smiled with his usual grace and suavity. "Oh Guiberto! Guiberto! my heart is breaking. Why should she want you to comfort her?—but—comfort her then!" and he covered his face within his hands.

"Remember," said Guiberto placidly, "her uncle is bedridden; her aunt never leaves him: the servants are old and sullen, and will stir for nobody. Finding her resolved, as they believe, to become a nun, they are little assiduous in their services. Humor her, if none else does, Amadeo; let her fancy that you intend to be a friar; and, for the present, walk not on these grounds."

"Are you true, or are you traitorous?" cried Amadeo, grasping his friend's hand most fiercely.

"Follow your own counsel, if you think mine insincere," said the young friar, not withdrawing his hand, but placing the other on Amadeo's. "Let me, however, advise you to conceal yourself; and I will direct Silvestrina to bring you such accounts of her mistress as may at least make you easy in regard to her health. Adieu."

Amadeo was now rather tranquil; more than he had ever been, not only since the displeasure of Monna Tita, but since the first sight of her. Profuse at all times in his gratitude to

Silvestrina, whenever she brought him good news, news better than usual, he pressed her to his bosom. Silvestrina Pioppi is about fifteen, slender, fresh, intelligent, lively, good-humored, sensitive; and any one but Amadeo might call her very pretty.

Petrarca. Ah, Giovanni! here I find your heart obtaining the mastery over your vivid and volatile imagination. Well have you said, the maiden being really pretty, any one but Amadeo might think her so. On the banks of the Sorga there are beautiful maids; the woods and the rocks have a thousand times[3] repeated it. I heard but one echo; I heard but one name: I would have fled from them for ever at another.

Boccaccio. Francesco, do not beat your breast just now: wait a little. Monna Tita would take the veil. The fatal certainty was announced to Amadeo by his true Guiberto, who had earnestly and repeatedly prayed her to consider the thing a few months longer.

"I will see her first! By all the saints of heaven I will see her!" cried the desperate Amadeo, and ran into the house, toward the still apartment of his beloved. Fortunately Guiberto was neither less active nor less strong than he, and overtaking him at the moment, drew him into the room opposite. "If you will be quiet and reasonable, there is yet a possibility left you," said Guiberto in his ear, although perhaps he did not think it. "But if you utter a voice or are seen by any one, you ruin the fame of her you love, and obstruct your own prospects for ever. It being known that you have not slept in Florence these several nights, it will be suspected by the malicious that you have slept in the villa with the connivance of Monna Tita. Compose yourself; answer nothing; rest where you are: do not add a worse imprudence to a very bad one. I promise you my assistance, my speedy return, and best counsel: you shall be released at day-break." He ordered Silvestrina to supply the unfortunate youth with the cordials usually administered to the uncle, or with the rich old wine they were made of; and she performed the order with such promptitude and attention, that he was soon in some sort refreshed.

[3] First ed. reads: "times told me so; and I would have fled from them for saying it. Giovanni! *they* could feel it! *Boccaccio.* Franceso," &c.]

Petrarca. I pity him from my soul, poor young man! Alas, we are none of us, by original sin, free from infirmities or from vices.

Boccaccio. If we could find a man exempt by nature from vices and infirmities, we should find one not worth knowing: he would also be void of tenderness and compassion. What allowances then could his best friends expect from him in their frailties? What help, consolation, and assistance in their misfortunes? We are in the midst of a workshop well stored with sharp instruments: we may do ill with many, unless we take heed; and good with all, if we will but learn how to employ them.

Petrarca. There is somewhat of reason in this. You strengthen me to proceed with you: I can bear the rest.

Boccaccio. Guiberto had[4] taken leave of his friend, and had advanced a quarter of a mile, which (as you perceive) is nearly the whole way, on his return to the monastery, when he was overtaken by some peasants who were hastening homeward from Florence. The information he collected from them made him determine to retrace his steps. He entered the room again, and, from the intelligence he had just acquired, gave Amadeo the assurance that Monna Tita must delay her entrance into the convent; for that the abbess had that moment gone down the hill on her way toward Siena to venerate some holy relics, carrying with her three candles, each five feet long, to burn before them; which candles contained many particles of the myrrh presented at the nativity of our Saviour by the wise men of the East. Amadeo breathed freely, and was persuaded by Guiberto to take another cup of old wine, and to eat with him some cold roast kid, which[5] had been offered him for *merenda.** After the agitation of his mind a heavy sleep fell upon the lover, coming almost before Guiberto departed; so heavy indeed that Silvestrina was alarmed. It was her apartment; and she performed the honors of it as well as any lady in Florence could have done.

Petrarca. I easily believe it: the poor are more attentive than the rich, and the young are more compassionate than the old.

[4 From "had" to "He" (6 lines added in 2nd ed.]
[5 From "which" to "merenda" added in 2nd ed.]
* *Meranda* is luncheon,—*meridiana*,—eaten by the wealthier at the hour when the peasants dine.

Boccaccio. O Francesco! what inconsistent creatures are we!

Petrarca. True, indeed! I now foresee the end. He might have done worse.

Boccaccio. I think so.

Petrarca. He almost deserved it.

Boccaccio. I think that too.

Petrarca. Wretched mortals! our passions for ever lead us into this, or worse.

Boccaccio. Ay, truly; much worse generally.

Petrarca. The very twig on which the flowers grew lately scourges us to the bone in its maturity.

Boccaccio. Incredible will it be to you, and, by my faith, to me it was hardly credible. Certain however is it, that Guiberto on his return by sunrise found Amadeo in the arms of sleep.

Petrarca. Not at all, not at all incredible: the truest lover would have done the same, exhausted by suffering.

Boccaccio. He was truly in the arms of sleep; but, Francesco, there was another pair of arms about him, worth twenty such, divinity as he is. A loud burst of laughter from Guiberto did not arouse either of the parties; but Monna Tita heard it, and rushed into the room, tearing her hair, and invoking the saints of heaven against the perfidy of man. She seized Silvestrina by that arm which appeared the most offending: the girl opened her eyes, turned on her face, rolled out of bed, and threw herself at the feet of her mistress, shedding tears, and wiping them away with the only piece of linen about her. Monna Tita too shed tears. Amadeo still slept profoundly; a flush, almost of crimson, overspreading his cheeks. Monna Tita led away, after some pause, poor Silvestrina, and made her confess the whole. She then wept more and more, and made the girl confess it again, and explain her confession. "I cannot believe such wickedness," she cried: "he could not be so hardened. O sinful Silvestrina! how will you ever tell Father Doni one half, one quarter? He never can absolve you."

Petrarca. Giovanni, I am glad I did not enter the house; you were prudent in restraining me. I have no pity for the youth at all: never did one so deserve to lose a mistress.

Boccaccio. Say, rather, to gain a wife.

Petrarca. Absurdity! impossibility!

Boccaccio. He won her fairly; strangely, and on a strange table, as he played his game. Listen! that guitar is Monna Tita's. Listen! what a fine voice (do not you think it) is Amadeo's.

Amadeo (*singing*).

Oh, I have err'd!
I laid my hand upon the nest
(Tita, I sigh to sing the rest)
Of the wrong bird.

Petrarca. She laughs too at it! Ah! Monna Tita was made by nature to live on this side of Fiesole.

XIV. CHAUCER, BOCCACCIO, AND PETRARCA.[1]

Petrarca. You have kept your promise like an English man, Ser* Geoffreddo: welcome to Arezzo. This gentleman is

[1 It is well known that the meeting of these three poets may have actually occurred. In 1372 Chaucer visited Florence on a mission from the King. Petrarca was then living at Arqua near Padua. Boccaccio was also near, and the three may easily have met. Landor's reason for choosing Arezzo is not clear; perhaps he had visited and liked the place. Chaucer's lines in prologue to the tale of Grisildis, show his respect for Petrarca, and at least suggest that he had talked with him.

I wil yow telle a tale, which that I
Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk
As proved by his wordes and his werk.
He now is dede and nayled in his chest,
Now God give his soule wel good rest!
Fraunces Petrarch, the laureat poete
Highte this clerk, whos rhetorique swete
Enluinynd al Ytail of poetrie.

The story put into Chaucer's mouth had, of course, to Landor, a local application. He was a Warwickshire man and liked to make fun of the Lucy family, as Shakespeare had done before him. There is a curious letter from Elizabeth Landor (Life, 335), describing the Lucy of that date and his little grandson. "He is old Lucy exactly. He believes the whole world was made for him, and in honour of his dignity. He opens his round little eyes, buttons his round little mouth, inflates his round little face, and is graver than any owl, including his grandpapa." (Imag. Convers., iv., 1829. Works, i., 1846. Works, iv., 1876.)]

* *Ser* is commonly used by Boccaccio and others for *Messer*.

Messer Giovanni Boccaccio, of whose unfinished *Decameron*, which I opened to you in manuscript, you expressed your admiration when we met at Florence in the spring.

Boccaccio. I was then at Certaldo, my native place, filling up my stories, and have only to regret that my acquaintance with one so friendly and partial to me has been formed so late.

How did Rome answer your expectations, sir?

Chaucer. I had passed through Pisa; of which city the Campo Santo, now nearly finished after half a century from its foundation, and the noble street along the Arno;* are incomparably more beautiful than any thing in Rome.

Petrarca. That is true. I have heard, however, some of your countrymen declare that Oxford is equal to Pisa, in the solidity, extent, and costliness of its structures.

Chaucer. Oxford is the most beautiful of our cities: it would be a very fine one if there were no houses in it.

Petrarca. How is that?

Chaucer. The lath-and-plaster white-washed houses look despicably mean under the colleges.

Boccaccio. Few see any thing in the same point of view. It would gratify me highly, if you would tell me with all the frankness of your character and your country, what struck you most in "*the capital of the world*," as the vilest slaves in it call their great open cloaca.

Chaucer. After the remains of antiquity, I know not whether any thing struck me more forcibly than the superiority of our English churches and monasteries.

Boccaccio. I do not wonder that yours should be richer and better built, although I never heard before that they are; for the money that is collected in Rome or elsewhere, by the pontiffs, is employed for the most part in the aggrandizement of their families. Messer Francesco, although he wears the habit of a churchman, speaks plainlier on these subjects than a simple secular, as I am, dar es to do.

Petrarca. We may, however, I trust, prefer the beauty and variety of our scenery to that of most in the world. Tuscany is

* The Corso in Rome is now much finer. P. Leopold dismantled the walls of Pisa, and demolished more than fifty towers and turrets. Every year castellated mansions are modernized in Italy.

less diversified and, excepting[2] the mountains above Camaldoli and Laverna, less sublime than many other parts of Italy; yet where does Nature smile with more contented gayety than in the vicinity of Florence? Great part of our sea-coast along the Mediterranean is uninteresting; yet it is beautiful in its whole extent from France to Massa. Afterward there is not a single point of attraction till you arrive at Terracina. The greater part of the way round the peninsula, from Terracina to Pesaro, has its changes of charms: thenceforward all is flat again.

Boccaccio. We cannot travel in the most picturesque and romantic regions of our Italy, from the deficiency of civilization in the people.

Chaucer. Yet, Messer Giovanni, I never journeyed so far through so enchanting a scenery as there is almost the whole of the way from Arezzo to Rome, particularly round Terni and Narni and Perugia.

Our master, Virgil, speaks of dreams that swarm upon the branches of one solitary elm. In this country, more than dreams swarm upon every spray and leaf; and every murmur of wood or water comes from and brings with it inspiration. Never shall I forget the hour when my whole soul was carried away from me by the cataract of Terni, and when all things existing were lost to me in its stupendous waters. The majestic woods that bowed their heads before it; the sun that was veiling his glory in mild translucent clouds over the furthest course of the river; the moon, that suspended her orb in the very centre of it, —seemed ministering Powers, themselves in undiminished admiration of the marvel they had been looking on through unnumbered ages. What are the works of man in comparison with this? What, indeed, are the other works of Nature?

Petrarca.[3] Ser Giovanni! this, which appears too great even for Nature, was not too great for man. Our ancestors achieved it. Curius Dentatus in his consulate, forbade the waters of the Velinus to inundate so beautiful a valley, and threw them down this precipice into the Nar. When the traces of all their other victories, all their other labors, shall have disappeared, this work of the earlier and the better Romans shall continue to

[2 From "excepting" to "Laverna" added in 2nd ed.]
[3 From "*Petrarca*" to "abroad" (24 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

perform its office, shall produce its full effect, and shall astonish the beholder as it astonished him at its first completion.

Chaucer. I was not forgetful that we heard the story from our guide, but I thought him a boaster; and now for the first time I learn that any great power hath been exerted for any great good. Roads were levelled for aggression, and vast edifices were constructed either for pride or policy, to commemorate some victory, to reward the Gods for giving it, or to keep them in the same temper. There is nothing of which men appear to have been in such perpetual apprehension, as the inconstancy of the deities they worship.

Many thanks, Ser Francesco, for reminding me of what the guide asserted, and for teaching me the truth. I thought the fall of the Velinus not only the work of Nature, but the most beautiful she had ever made on earth. My prevention, in regard to the country about Rome, was almost as great and almost as unjust to Nature, from what I had heard of it both at home and abroad. In the approach to the eternal city, she seems to have surrendered much of her wildness, and to have assumed all her stateliness and sedateness, all her awfulness and severity. The vast plain toward the sea abases the soul together with it; while the hills on the left, chiefly those of Tusculum and of Tiber, overshadow and almost overwhelm it with obscure remembrances, some of them descending from the heroic ages, others from an age more miraculous than the heroic, the herculean infancy of immortal Rome. Soracte comes boldly forward, and stands alone. Round about, on every side, we behold an infinity of baronial castles, many moated and flanked with towers and bastions; many following the direction of the precipitous hills, of which they cover the whole summit. Tracts of land, where formerly stood entire nations, are now the property of some rude baron, descendant of a murderer too formidable for punishment, or of a robber too rich for it; and the ruins of cities, which had sunk in luxury when England was one wide forest, are carted off by a herd of slaves and buffaloes to patch up the crevices of a fort or dungeon.

Boccaccio. Messer Francesco groans upon this and wipes his brow.

Petrarca. Indeed I do.

Three years ago my fancy and hopes were inflamed by what I believed to be the proximity of regeneration. Cola Rienzi might have established good and equitable laws: even the Papacy, from hatred of the barons, would have countenanced the enaction of them, hoping at some future time to pervert and subjugate the people as before. The vanity of this tribune, who corresponded with kings and emperors, and found them pliable and ductile, was not only the ruin of himself and of the government he had founded, but threw down, beyond the chance of retrieving it, the Roman name.

Let us converse no more about it. I did my duty; yet our failure afflicts me, and will afflict me until my death. Jubilees, and other such mummeries, are deemed abundant compensation for lost dignity, lost power and empire, lost freedom and independence. We who had any hand in raising up our country from her abject state are looked on with jealousy by those wretches to whom cowardice and flight alone give the titles and rewards of loyalty; with sneers and scorn by those who share among themselves the emoluments of office; and, lest consolation be altogether wanting, with somewhat of well-meaning compassion, as weak misguided visionaries, by quiet good creatures who would have beslavered and adored us if we had succeeded.

The nation that loses her liberty is not aware of her misfortune at the time, any more than the patient is who receives a paralytic stroke. He who first tells either of them what has happened is repulsed as a simpleton or a churl.

Boccaccio. When Messer Francesco talks about liberty, he talks loud. Let us walk away from the green,* into the cathedral which the congregation is leaving.

Petrarca. Come, now, Giovanni, tell us some affecting story, suitable to the gloominess of the place.

Boccaccio. If Ser Geoffreddo felt in honest truth any pleasure at reading my *Decameron*, he owes me a tithe at least of the stories it contains; for I shall not be so courteous as to tell him that one of his invention is worth ten of mine, until I have had all his ten from him: if not now, another day.

Chaucer. Let life be spared to me, and I will carry the tithe

* The cathedral of Arezzo stands on a green, in which are pleasant walks commanding an extensive view.

in triumph through my country, much as may be shed of the heavier and riper grain by the conveyance and the handling of it. And I will attempt to show Englishmen what Italians are; how much deeper in thought, intenser in feeling, and richer in imagination, than ever formerly: and I will try whether we cannot raise poetry under our fogs, and merriment among our marshes. We must at first throw some litter about it, which those who come after us may remove.

Petrarca. Do not threaten, Ser Geoffreddo! Englishmen act.

Boccaccio. Messer Francesco is grown melancholy at the spectre of the tribune. Relate to us some amusing tale, either of court or war.

Chaucer. It would ill become me, signors, to refuse what I can offer; and truly I am loath to be silent, when a fair occasion is before me of adverting to those of my countrymen who fought in the battle of Cressy, as did one or two or more of the persons that are the subjects of my narrative.

Boccaccio. Enormous and horrible as was the slaughter of the French in that fight, and hateful as is war altogether to you and me, Francesco, I do expect from the countenance of Ser Geoffreddo, that he will rather make us merry than sad.

Chaucer. I hope I may, the story not wholly nor principally relating to the battle.

Sir Magnus Lucy is a knight of ample possessions and of no obscure family, in the shire of Warwick, one of our inland provinces. He was left in his childhood under the guardianship of a mother, who loved him more fondly than discreetly. Beside which disadvantage, there was always wanting in his family the nerve or fluid, or whatever else it may be, on which the intellectual powers are nourished and put in motion. The good Lady Joan would never let him enter the lists at jousts and tournaments, to which indeed he showed small inclination, nor would she encourage him to practise or learn any martial exercise. He was excused from the wars under the plea that he was subject to epilepsy; somewhat of which fit or another had befallen him in his adolescence, from having eaten too freely of a cold swan, after dinner. To render him justice, he had given once an indication of courage. A farmer's son upon his estate, a few years younger than himself,

had become a good player at quarter-staff, and was invited to Charlecote, the residence of the Lucys, to exhibit his address in this useful and manly sport. The lad was then about sixteen years old, or rather more; and another of the same parish, and about the same standing, was appointed his antagonist. The sight animated Sir Magnus; who, seeing the game over and both combatants out of breath, called out to Peter Crosby the conqueror, and declared his readiness to engage with him, on these conditions: First, that he should have a helmet on his head with a cushion over it,—both of which he sent for ere he made the proposal, and both of which were already brought to him, the one from a buck's horn in the hall, the other from his mother's chair in the parlor; secondly, that his visor should be down; thirdly, that Peter should never aim at his body or arms; fourthly and lastly, for he would not be too particular, that, instead of a cudgel, he should use a bulrush, enwrapped in the under-coat he had taken off, lest any thing venomous should be sticking to it, as his mother said there might be, from the spittle or spawn of toads, evets, water-snakes, and adders.

Peter scraped back his right foot, leaned forward, and laid his hooked fingers on his brow, not without scratching it,—the multiform signification of humble compliance in our country. John Crosby, the father of Peter, was a merry, jocose old man, not a little propense to the mischievous. He had about him a powder of a sternutatory quality, whether in preparation for some trick among his boon companions, or useful in the catching of chub and bream, as many suspected, is indifferent to my story. This powder he inserted in the head of the bulrush, which he pretended to soften and to cleanse by rubbing, while he instructed his lad in the use and application of it. Peter learned the lesson so well, and delivered it so skilfully, that at the very first blow the powder went into the aperture of the visor, and not only operated on the nostrils, but equally on the two spherical, horny, fish-like eyes above it. Sir Magnus wailed aloud, dropped his cudgel, tore with great effort (for it was well fastened) the pillow from his helmet, and implored the attendants to embrace him, crying, "Oh Jesu! Jesu! I am in the agonies of death: receive my spirit!" John Crosby kicked the ankle of the farmer who sat next him on the turf, and whispered, "He must find it first."

The mischief was attributed to the light and downy particles of the bulrush, detached by the unlucky blow; and John, springing up when he had spoken the words, and seizing it from the hand of his son, laid it lustily about his shoulders until it fell in dust on every side, crying, "Scape-grace! scape-grace! born to break thy father's heart in splinters! Is it thus thou beginnest thy service to so brave and generous a master? Out of my sight!"

Never was the trick divulged by the friends of Peter until after his death, which happened lately at the battle of Cressy. While Peter was fighting for his king and country, Sir Magnus resolved to display his wealth and splendor in his native land. He had heard of princes and other great men travelling in disguise, and under names not belonging to them. This is easy of imitation: he resolved to try it; although at first a qualm of conscience came over him on the part of the Christian name which his godfathers and godmothers had given him, but which however was so distinguishing that he determined to lay it aside, first asking leave of three saints, paying three groats into the alms-box, saying twelve paternosters within the hour, and making the priest of the parish drunk at supper. He now gave it out by sound of horn that he should leave Charlecote, and travel *incognito* through several parts of England. For this purpose he locked up the liveries of his valets, and borrowed for them from his tenants the dress of yeomanry. Three grooms rode forward in buff habiliments, with three led horses well caparisoned. Before noon he reached a small town called Henley-in-Arden, as his host at the inn-door told him, adding, when the knight dismounted, that there were scholars who had argued in his hearing whether the name of Arden were derived from another forest so called in Germany, or from a puissant family which bore it, being earls of Warwick in the reign of Edward the Confessor. "It is the opinion of the Abbot of Tewkesbury, and likewise of my very good master, him of Evesham," said the host, "that the Saxon earls brought over the name with them from their own country, and gave it to the wilder part of their dominions in this of ours."

"No such family now," cried the knight. "We have driven them out, bag and baggage, long ago, being braver men than they were."

A thought however struck him that the vacant name might cover and befit him in this expedition; and he ordered his servants to call him Sir Nigel de Arden.

Continuing his march northward, he protested that nothing short of the Trent (if indeed that river were not a fabulous one) should stop him; nay, by the rood, not even the Trent itself, if there were any bridge over it strong enough to bear a horse caparisoned, or any ford which he could see a herd of oxen or a score of sheep fit for the butcher pass across. Early on the second morning he was nigh upon twenty miles from home, at a hamlet we call Bromwicham, where be two or three furnaces and sundry smiths, able to make a horse-shoe in time of need, allowing them drink and leisure. He commanded his steward to disburse unto the elder of them one penny of lawful coin, advising the cunning man to look well and soberly at his steed's hoofs, and at those of the other steeds in his company; which being done, and no repairs being necessary, Sir Magnus then proceeded to the vicinity of another hamlet called Sutton Colefield, in which country is a well-wooded and well-stocked chase, belonging to my dread master the Duke of Lancaster, who often taketh his sport therein. Here, unhappily for the knight, were the keepers of the said chase hunting the red and fallow deer. The horse of the worshipful knight, having a great affection for dogs, and inspirited by the prancing and neighing of his fellow-creatures about him, sprang forward, and relaxed not any great matter of his mettle before he reached the next forest of Cannock, where the buck that was pursued pierced the thickets and escaped his enemies. In the village of Cannock was the knight, at his extremity, fain to look for other farriery than that which is exercised by the craft in Bromwicham, and upon other flesh than horseflesh, and about parts less horny than hoofs, however hardened be the same parts by untoward bumps and contusions. This farriery was applied by a skilful and discreet leech, while Sir Magnus opened his missal on his bed in the posture of devotion, and while a priest, who had been called in to comfort him, was looking for the penetential psalms of good king David,—the only service (he assured Sir Magnus) that had any effect in the removal or alleviation of such sufferings.

When the host at Cannock heard the name of his guest,

"'Sblood!" cried he to his son, "ride over, Emanuel, to Longcroft, and inform the worshipful youths, Humphrey and Henry, that one of their kinsmen is come over from the other side of Warwickshire to visit them, and has lost his way in the forest through a love of sport."

On his road into Rugeley, Emanuel met them together, and told them his errand. They had heard the horn as they were riding out, had joined the hunt, and were now returning home. Indignant at first that any one should take the name of their family, they went on asking more and more questions and their anger abated as their curiosity increased. Having an abundance of good-humor and of joviality in their nature, they agreed to act courteously, and turn the adventure into glee and joyousness. So they went back with Emanuel to his father's at Cannock, and were received by the townspeople with much deference and respect. The attendants of Sir Magnus observed it, and were earnest to see in what manner the adventure would terminate.

"Go," said Humphrey, "and tell your Master Sir Nigel that his kinsmen are come to pay their duty to him." The clergyman who had been reading the penitential psalms, and had afterwards said Mass, opened the chamber-door for them, and conducted them to Sir Magnus. They began their compliments by telling him that, although the house at Longcroft was unworthy of their kinsman's reception, in the absence of their father,—when they were interrupted by the knight, who cried aloud in a clear quaver, "Young gentlemen! I have no relative in these parts: I come from the very end of Warwickshire. Reverend sir priest! I do protest and vow I have no cognizance of these two young gentlemen."

As he spoke the sweat hung upon his brow, the cause of which neither the brothers nor the priest could interpret; but it really was lest they should have come to dine with him, and perhaps have moreover some retinue in the yard. Disclaimed so unceremoniously, Humphrey de Arden opened a leathern purse, and carefully took out his father's letter. Whereat the alarm of Sir Magnus increased beyond measure, from the uncertainty of its contents, and from the certainty of being discovered as the usurper of a noble name. His terrors however were groundless; the letter was this:—

"Son Humphrey,—I grieve that the valet who promised me those three strong geldings, and took moneys thereupon, hath mortally disappointed me; for verily we have hard work here, being one against seven or eight;* and, if matters go on in this guise, I must e'en fight afoot ere it be long: they have killed among them my brave old Black Jack, who had often winnowed them with his broken wind, which was not broken till they broke it. The drunken fat rogue that now fails me would rather hunt on Colefield or (if he dare come so near to you) on Cannock, than lead the three good steeds in a halter up Yoxall Lane. Whenever ye find him, stand within law with him and use whit-leather rather than Needwood holly, which might provoke the judge; and take the three hale nags, coming hither with them yourselves, and paying him forthwith three angels, due unto him on the feast of Saint Barnabas and that other (St Jude, as I am now reminded), if ye have so many; if not, mortgage a meadow. And let this serve as a warrant from your loving father.† ††"

"What is that to me?" cried in agony Sir Magnus. The priest took the letter and shook his head. "Sir priest! you see how it stands with us;" said the knight. "Do deliver me from the lion's den and from the young lions!"

"Friend!" said the priest, gravely and sternly, "I know the mark of Sir Humphrey; and the handwriting is my own brother's, who, taking with him in his saddle-bag a goose-pie and twelve strings of black pudding for Sir Humphrey, left his cure at Tamworth but four months ago, and joined the army in France, in order to shrive the wounded. It is my duty to make known unto the sheriff whatever is irregular in my parish."

"Oh, for the love of Christ, say nothing to the sheriff! I will confess all," exclaimed the knight.

The attendants and many of the customers and country-folks had listened at the door, which was indeed wide open; and the priest, being now confirmed in his suspicion by the knight's offer to "confess all," walked slowly through them, mounted his

* Such soon afterward was the disproportion of numbers at the battle of Cressy.

† The mark of a knight, instead of his name, is not be wondered at. Out of the thirty-six barons who subscribed the Magna Charta, three only signed with their names.

palfrey, and rode over to the sheriff at Penkridge. The two young gentlemen were delighted on seeing the consternation of Sir Magnus and his company, and encouraged by the familiarity of one among them, led him aside and said, "It will be well and happy for you if you persuade the others of your party to return home speedily. The sheriff is a shrewd severe man, and will surely send every soul of you into Picardy, excepting such as he may gibbet on the common for an ensample."

"Masters!" replied the Warwickshire wag, "I will return among them and frighten them into the road; but you two brave lads shall have your horses, and your father his, together with such attendants as you little reckon on. Are ye for the wars?"

"We were going," said they gayly, "whenever we could raise enough moneys from our father's tenantry; for he, much as he desires to have us with him, is very loath to be badly equipped; and would peradventure see us rather slain in battle, or (what he thinks worse) not in it at all, than villanously mounted."

"Will ye take me?" cried the gallant yeoman.

"Gladly," answered they both together.

Ralph Roebuck was the name of this brave youngster; and, without another word, he ran among his fellows, and putting his hand above his ear, as our hunters are wont, shouted aloud, "Who's for hanging this fine morning?" "Ralph!" chimed they together, somewhat languidly, "What dost mean?"

"I mean," whispered he slowly and distinctly to the nearest, "that the country will be up in half an hour; that the priest is gone for the sheriff; and that if he went for the devil he could fetch him. I never knew a priest at a fault, whatever he winded. Whosoe'er has a horse able to carry him is in luck. In my mind there will be some heels without a stirrup under them before to-morrow, kick as they may to find it. I must not however be unfaithful to my master, for whom I have spoken a fair word and worn a smiling face, in my perils and tribulations, with these stout young gallants. Each to his own bit and bridle: the three led chargers let no man touch, on his life. For the rest, I will be spokesman, in lack of a better. May we meet again in Charlecote, at least half the number we set out!"

Away they ran, saddled their horses, and rode off. Ralph, who had lately been put in the stocks by his master for drinking

a cup too much and for singing a song by no means dissuasive of incontinence, now for the first time began to think of it again, and expected a like repose after less baiting. Presently came up a swart, thin, fierce little man, with four others bearing arms. He, observing Ralph, ordered him to "stand," in the king's name. Ralph had been standing, and stood, with his arms before him, hanging as if they were broken.

"Varlet and villain!" cried the under-sheriff, for such was the little man, "who art thou?"

"May it please your honor," answered he submissively, "my name is a real one and my own, such as it is."

"And what may it be, sirrah!"

"Ralph Roebuck."

"Egad!" cried the little man starting at it, "that too sounds like a feigned one. Ye are all rogues and vagrants. Where are thy fellows?"

"I can answer only for myself, may it please your worship!" said Ralph.

"Where is thy leader, vagabond!" cried the magistrate, more and more indignant.

"God knows," answered Ralph, dolorously.

"Has he fled with the rest of his gang?"

"God grant he may," ejaculated Roebuck, "rather than hang upon the cursed tree."

The under-sheriff then ordered his people to hold Ralph in custody, and went and saluted the two De Ardens, who requested that clemency might be shown to every one implicated in an offence so slight.

"We must consider of that," answered the under-sheriff. "Edward à Brocton the priest of Cannock here, has given me this letter, which he swears is written by his brother William, priest of Tamworth, and marked by your worshipful father." The young men bowed. "Who is the rogue that defrauded him," resumed the under-sheriff, "in the three horses, to our lord the king's great detriment and discomfort?"

It was not for them, they replied, to incriminate any one; nor indeed would they knowingly bring any man's blood on their heads, if they could help it.

"The impostor in the house shall be examined," cried the little

man, drawing his forefinger along his lips, for they were foamy. He went into the room and found the knight in a shower of tears.

"Call my varlets! call my rogues!" cried Sir Magnus, wringing his hands and turning away his face.

"Rogues!" said the under-sheriff. "They are gone off, and in another county, or near upon it; else would I hang them all speedily, as I will thee, by God's pleasure. How many horses hast thou in the stable?"

"Sir! good sir! gentle sir! patience a little! Let me think awhile!" said the knight.

"Ay, ay, ay! let thee think forsooth!" scornfully and canorously in well-sustained tenor hymned the son of Themis. "This paper hath told me."

"Worthy sir!" said the knight, "hear reason! Hear truth and righteousness and justification by faith! Hear a sinner in tribulation, in the shadow of death!"

"Faith, sirrah! thou art very near the substance, if there be any," interposed the under-sheriff.

"Nay, nay! hold, I beseech you! As I have a soul to be saved"—

"Pack it up then! pack it up! I will give it a lift when it is ready."

"O sir sheriff, sir sheriff! I am disposed to swear on the rood, I am not, and never was, Sir Nigel de Arden."

At these words the under-sheriff laughed bitterly, and said, "Nor I neither;" and, going out of the room, ordered a guard to stand at the door.

Henry then took him by the arm and said softly, "Gildart! do not be severe with the poor young man below. It is true he is in the secret, which he swears he will not betray if he dies for it; but he promises us the three horses without trial or suit or trouble or delay, and hopes you will allow his master to leave the kingdom in peace and safety under his conduct, promising to serve the king, together with us faithfully in his wars."

"We could not do better," answered the under-sheriff, "if we were certain the fellow and his gang would not waylay and murder you on the road."

"Never fear!" cried Henry. "As we shall have other attendants, and are neither less strong nor (I trust) less courageous than he we will venture, with your leave and permission."

This was given in writing. The under-sheriff ordered his guards to bring down the culprit, who came limping and very slow.

"Pity he cannot feign and counterfeit a little better on the spur of the occasion!" said the under-sheriff. "He well answers the description of fat and lazy: as for drunken, it shall not be to-day on Cannock ale or Burton beer."

When the knight had descended the stairs, and saw Ralph Roebuck, he shrieked aloud with surprise and gladness, "O thou good and faithful servant! enter into the joy of thy lord!"

"God's blood!" cried Ralph. "I must enter then into a thing narrower than a weasel's or a wasp's hole. To what evil have you led us?"

"Now you can speak for me!" said the knight.

Ralph shook his head and sighed, "It will not do, master! I am resolved to keep my promise, which you commanded upon first setting out, though it may cost me limb or life. Master, one word in your ear.

"No whisperings! no connivances! no plans or projects of escape!" cried the guard. They helped Sir Magnus into his saddle with more than their hands and arms; which, instead of officiousness, he thought an indignity, though it might be the practice of those parts. The two De Ardens mounted two of the richly caparisoned steeds; the third was led by their servant, who went homeward with those also which they had ridden for what was necessary, being ordered to rejoin them at Lichfield. Ralph Roebuck sat alert on his own sorrel palfrey, a quick and active one, with open transparent nostrils. He would, as became him, have kept behind his master, if the knight had not called him to his side, complaining that the length and roughness of the roads had shaken his saddle so as to make it uneven and uneasy. Many and pressing were the offers of Ralph to set it right: Sir Magnus shook his head, and answered that "man is born to suffering as the sparks fly upward."

"I could wish, sir," said Ralph, "if it did not interfere with higher dispensations"—

"The very word, Ralph! the very word! thou rememberest it! I could not bring it nicely to mind. Several Sundays have passed since we heard it. Well! what couldst thou wish?"

"That your worship had under you at this juncture the cushion

of our late good Lady Joan, which might serve you now somewhat better than it did at the battle of the bulrush. We all serve best in our places."

"By our lady! Ralph! I never saw a man so much improved by his travels as thou art. What shall we both be ere we reach home again?"

Ralph persuaded his master how much better it were that his worship did not return too speedily among the cravens and recreants who had deserted him, and who probably would be pursued; and then what a shame and scandal it would be, if such a powerful knight as Sir Magnus should see them dragged from his own hall, and from under his own eyes, to prison. If by any means it could be contrived to prolong the journey a few days, it would be a blessing; and the De Ardens, it might be hoped, would say nothing of the matter to the sheriff. Sir Magnus felt that his importance would be lowered by the seizure of his servants, in his presence and under his roof; and he had other reasons for wishing to ride leisurely, in which his more active companions little participated. On their urging him to push forward, he complained that his horse had been neglected, and had neither tasted oat nor bean, nor even sweet meadow-hay, at Cannock. His company expressed the utmost solicitude that this neglect should be promptly remedied, and, grieving that the next stage was still several miles distant, offered, and at the same time exerted, their best services in bringing the hungry and loitering steed to a trot. Sir Magnus now had his shrewd suspicions, he said, that the saddle had been ill looked to, and doubted whether a nail from behind might not somehow have dropped lower. When he would have cleared up his doubts by the agency of his hand, again the whip, applied to his flinching steed, disturbed the elucidation; and his knuckles, instead of solving the knotty point, only added to its nodosity. At last he cried, "Roebuck! Roebuck! gently, softly! If we go on at this rate, in another half-hour I shall be black and bloody as ever rook was that dropped ill-fledged from the rookery."

"The Lord hath well speeded our flight," said Ralph relenting: "he hath delivered us from our enemies. What miles and miles have we travelled, to all appearance, in a few hours!"

"Not many hours indeed," answered the knight, still pondering. "What is yon red spire?" added he.

"The Tower of Babel," replied Ralph composedly.

"I cannot well think it," muttered Sir Magnus in suspense. "They would never have dared to rebuild it, after God's anger thereupon."

It was the spire of Lichfield cathedral.

When they entered the city they found there some hundreds of French prisoners, taken in the late skirmishes, who were chattering and laughing and boasting of their invincibility. Their sun-burned faces, their meagre bodies, their loud cries, and the violence our surly countrymen expressed at not being understood by them, although as natives of Lichfield they spoke such good English, removed in part the doubts of Sir Magnus, even before he heard our host cry, "By God! a very Babel!" Later in the evening came some Welshmen, having passed through Shropshire and Cheshire with mountain sheep for the fair the next morning. These two were unintelligible in their language, and different from the others. They quarrelled with the French for mocking them, as they thought. Sir Magnus expressed his wonder that an Englishmen, which the host was, should be found in such a far country, among the heathen; albeit some of them spoke English, not being able for their hearts and souls to do otherwise, since all the languages in the world were spoken there as a judgment on the ungodly. He confessed he had always thought Babel was in another place, though he could not put his finger upon it exactly. Nothing, he added, so clearly proved the real fact, as that the sheep themselves were misbegotten and black-faced, and several of them altogether tawny like a Moor's head he had seen, he told them, in the chancel-window of Saint Mary's at Warwick. "Which reminds me," said the pious knight, "that the hour of Angelus must be at hand; and, beside the usual service, I have several forms of thanksgiving to run through before I break bread again."

It was allowed him to go alone upstairs for his devotions, in which, ye will have observed, he was very regular. Meanwhile the landlord and his two daughters, two buxom wenches, were admitted into the secret; and it was agreed that at supper all should speak a jargon, by degrees more and more confused, and that at last every imaginable mistake should be made in executing the orders of the company. The girls entered heartily

into the device, and the rosy-faced father gave them hints and directions while the supper was being cooked. Sir Magnus came down, after a time, covered with sweat. He protested that the heat of the climate in these countries was intolerable, particularly in his bedroom; that indeed he had felt it before, in the open air, but only on certain portions of the body which certain stars have an influence upon, and not at all in the face.

The oven had been heated just under the knight's bed, in order to supply loaves for the farmers and drovers the following day.

Supper was now served: bread however was wanting. The knight desired one of the young women to give him some. She looked at him in astonishment, shrank back, blushed, and hid her face in her apron. The father came forward furiously, and said many words, or rather uttered many sounds, which Sir Magnus could not understand. He requested his attendant Ralph to explain. Ralph made a few attempts at English, and, failing in it, spoke very fluently another tongue. The father and his daughters stared one at another, and brought a bucket of hot water, with a square of soap; then a goose's wing; then a sack of gray peas; then a blackbird in a cage; then a mustard pot; then a handful of brown paper; then a pair of white rabbits, hanging by the ears. Sir Magnus now addressed the other girl. She appeared more willing to comply, and, making a sign at her father, whose back was turned in his anxiety to find what was called for, as if she would be kinder still when he was out of the way, laid her arm across the neck of the knight, and withdrew it hesitatingly and timidly. At this instant a great dog entered, allured by the smell of the meat. The knight's lips quivered, and the first accents he uttered audibly and distinctly were,—"Seeking whom he may devour." Then falling on his knees, he cried aloud, "O Lord! thy mercies are manifold! I am a sinner."

The girl trembled from head to foot, ready to burst with the laughter she was suppressing, and kissed her father, and appeared to implore his pardon. He pushed her back and cried, "Away! I saw thee! I saw thee with these very eyes!" clenching his fist and striking his brow frantically. "I saw thy shadow upon the wall. No wickedness is hidden."

"The hand-writing! the hand-writing!—That was upon the wall, too! perhaps upon this very one," exclaimed the conscience-

stricken and aghast Sir Magnus. He fell on his knees, and praised the Lord for allowing to the host again the use of his mother-tongue; for the salvation of him a sinner; if indeed it were not the Lord himself who spake by the lips of his servant in the words, "No wickedness is hidden." After a prayer, he protested that, although indeed his heart was corrupt, as all hearts were, the devil had failed to inflame him universally. Not one knew what he said. Humphrey laughed and nodded assent; Henry offered him baked apples; Ralph brushed his doublet-sleeve.

Before it was light in the morning, the horses were at the door; nobody appeared; no money had been paid or demanded: nevertheless it seemed an inn. They mounted; they mused; they feared to meet each other's eyes: at last Ralph addressed one of the De Ardens in a low voice, but so as to be heard by his master. The two brothers tried each a monosyllable: Ralph shook his head, and they looked despondently. Attempts were renewed at intervals for several miles; when suddenly a distant bell was heard, probably from the cathedral, and Humphrey cried, "Matins! matins!" At this moment all spoke English perfectly, and the knight uttered many fervent ejaculations. The others related their sufferings and visions; and when they had ended, Sir Magnus said he seemed to hear throughout the night the roaring of a fiery furnace, for all the world like King Nebuchadnezzar's; only that sinful bodies, and not righteous ones, were moved and shoved backward and forward in it, until their bones grated like iron, and until his own teeth chattered so in his head he could hear them no longer.

His conductor was careful to avoid the county of Warwick, lest any one should recognise the knight, little as was the chance of it; for he never had been further from home than at Warwick, and there but twice, the distance being five good miles. On his way toward the coast, he wondered to find the stars so very like those at Charlecote; and some of them seemed to know him and wink at him. He thought indeed here were a good many more of them awake and stirring; because he had been longer out of doors than he had ever been before, at night. Slowly as he would have travelled, if he had been allowed his own way, on the sixth morning from his adventure at Cannock he had come

within sight of the coast. To his questions no other answer was returned, than that the times were unquiet; that the roads were infested with robbers; and that the orders of a sheriff were as a king's. In the afternoon, the travellers descended the narrow holloway that leads into the seaport town of Hastings. Ralph pointed at some sailors who were stepping into a boat, and cried, "Master! what do you think of these?"

"I think, Roebuck," answered he, after pondering some moments, "that they are like unto those who go down into the great waters."

The De Ardens were conveying their stores and horses aboard, to lose no time, when Ralph whispered in the ear of the knight, "Sir knight! do not, for the love of Christ! do not venture with those two dare-devils any further. Let us take only a small boat, just large enough to enter the Avon. There is a short cut hereabout, if we could find it. For six pieces of gold we may hire as many sailors to hazard their liberties and lives for us, and see us safe at home again."

"Six [4] pieces of gold!" repeated Sir Magnus very slowly and distinctly: "six pieces of gold, in these hard times, go well-nigh to purchase an acre of pasture-land."

"True," replied Roebuck, "with a hundred of sand and a thousand of sea thrown in, as hoof and shank to a buttock of beef."

"Indeed!" interjected Sir Magnus. "Why, then, would not it be better to look out for some such investment of said moneys, and to get the indentures fairly engrossed forthwith?"

"Investment! indentures!" cried Ralph. "Master! it is well for those who can carry by land and sea such fine learned words about with 'em, which are enough to show a man's gentility all the world over."

It is uncertain whether Sir Magnus heard him, for he continued to utter and repeat the substance of his reflections.

"What a quantity of fishes there must be in a thousand acres of deep salt water, being well looked to! Rats and otters might sneeze their hearts out before they could catch a fin, with the brine and foam bobbing up everlastingly and buffeting their

[4 From "Six" to "hundreds" (33 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

whiskers; and the poachers must buy lime-kilns, and forests, and mines of pure poison, if they would make the fish drunk at the bottom. Furthermore, there never could be a lack of sand at Charlecote these twenty years to come, for kitchen or scullery or walk before the hall-windows, or repairs of cow-house or dove-cot; and many a cart-load would be lying in store for sale."

"There is great foresight and cleverness in all this," said Ralph; "and if your worship had only six gold pieces in the world, no time ought to be lost in running with 'em seaward. But to my foolishness, three for life and three for liberty seem reasonable enough. Pirates, and even fair-fighting enemies, such as those gentlemen over the way, demand for a knight's ransom as many hundreds."

The knight drew back and hesitated.

"Well,[5] sir!" said Ralph, "the business is none of mine. I have been let go ere now for an old song when I had angered my man: here I have angered nobody. I am safe anywhere, and welcome in most places."

"I am fain to learn that old song of his," said the knight inaudibly.

Roebuck continued: "I have no hall with antlers in it; I would rather eat a sucking-pig than a swan, and a griskin than a heron; and I can do either with good-will about noon any day in seven, baiting Friday, and without mounting up three long steps that run across the room, or resting my feet on a dainty mat of rushes. A good blazing kitchen-fire is enough for me.[6] I care neither for bucks nor partridges. As for spiced ale at christenings and weddings, I may catch a draught of it when it passes. Sack I have heard of: poor tipple, I doubt, that wants sweetening. But a horn of home-brewed beer, frothing leisurely, and humming lowly its contented tune, is suitable to my taste and condition; and I envy not the great and glorious who have a goose with a capon in his belly on the table, or[7] even a peacock, his head as good as alive, and the proudest of his feathers to crown him."

The knight answered, "Somehow I do not like to part with

[5] From "Well" to "rushes" (12 lines) added in 2nd ed.]
[6] First ed. reads: "me, said Ralph. I," &c.]
[7] From "or" to "him" (2 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

my gold: I never saw any in coinage till last Easter;* and it seems so fresh and sunshiny and pleasant, I would keep it to look at in damp weather. Pay the varlets in groats."

"Sir Knight!" replied Ralph, "do not let them see your store of groats, which are very handy, and sundry of these likewise are quite new."

"Nobody would pay away new groats that could help it," sighed Sir Magnus.

"The gold must go, and make room for more," said Roebuck. The knight answered nothing; but turning round, lest anybody should notice his capacious and well-stored scrip, he drew forth the six pieces, and, after a doubt and a trial with his thumb and finger, whether by reason of their roughness two peradventure might not stick together and make seven, he placed them in the palm of Roebuck, who took them with equal silence and less uncertainty. Great contentment was manifested by the worshipful knight that the two De Ardens had left him; and he ate a good dinner, and drank a glass of Rhenish, which he said was "pure sour;" and presently was anxious to go aboard the boat, if it was ready. Ralph conducted him to it, and helped him in. The rowers for some time played their parts lustily, and then hoisted sail. Roebuck asked the oldest of them whether the wind was fair. "Passably," said he; "but unless we look sharp we may be carried into the Low Countries."

"I do not see anywhere that short cut, nor that brook which runs into the Avon," said Sir Magnus. "As for the Low Countries, no fear of them: the water rises before us, and we mount higher and higher every moment, insomuch that I begin to feel as if I were going up in a swing, like that between the elms."

Presently Old Ocean exacted from him his tribute, which the powerfullest not of knights only and barons, but of princes and kings, must pay him in his own dominions, bending their heads and stretching out their arms and acknowledging his supremacy with tears and groans. He now fancied he had been poisoned on shore; and was confirmed in his belief when Roebuck hummed a tune without any words to it, prodigal and profuse as he was of

* The first gold coined in England came out rather more than a year before this time, that is in 1344; the quantity was small, and probably the circulation not rapid nor extensive.

them on ordinary occasions; and when neither he nor any of the sailors would bring him such a trifle as water-gruel sweetened with clary wine, or camomile flowers picked with the dew upon them and simmered in fair spring-water and in an earthen pan, or viperbroth with a spoonful of Venice-treacle in it, stirred with the tusk of a wild-boar in the first quarter of the moon: the only things he asked them for. Soon however his pains abated, yet he complained that his eyesight was so affected he seemed to see nothing but greenish water, like leek-porridge, albeit by his reckoning they must now be near the brook.

"Methinks," said he, "we are running after that great white ship yonder."

"Methinks so too," answered Ralph; crying, "How is this?" with apparent anger, to the sailors.

"It cannot be otherwise," said one of them; "the boat is the brig's own daughter: what mortal can keep them asunder! You might as well hope to hold tight by your teeth a two months' calf from its dam."

"Why didst not thou see to that, Ralph?" cried the knight in the bitterness of his soul. "Always rash and imprudent!"

Roebuck attempted to console his master with the display of the honors that would be shown him aboard the brig, when his quality should be discovered. Then, taking advantage of a shoal of porpoises, that rolled and darted in every direction round the boat, he showed them to Sir Magnus, who turned pale at seeing them so near him. "Never be frightened at a parcel of bots!" cried Roebuck.

"Bots! what, those vast creatures?"

"Ay, surely," said one of the sailors. "The sea-horses avoid them by millions in a moment: you may sometimes see a thousand of them sticking on a single hair of their tails."

"Do those horses come within sight then?" said Sir Magnus, tremulously.

"Only when they are itchy," answered the mariner; "and then they contrive to slip between a boat and a brig, and crack a couple or three at a time of those troublesome little insects."

Sir Magnus said something to himself about the wonders of the great deep, and praised God for having kept hitherto such a breed of bots out of his stables. He began to see clearly how

fitted everything is to the place it occupies; and how certainly these creatures were created to be killed between brigs and boats.

Meditations must have their end, though they reach to heaven.

Great as had been the consternation of Sir Magnus at the sight of the porpoises, and at the probability that a hair of some stray marine horse, covered over with them, might lie between him and the river,—greater still was it, if possible, at approaching the brig, and discerning the two De Ardens. "What can they want with me?" cried he. "I am resolved not to go home with them."

Roebuck raised his spirits, by swearing that nothing of the kind should happen while he had a drop of blood in his veins. "Hark! Sir Knight!" said he. "Observe how the two young gentlemen are behaving."

Gayly indeed did they accost him, and imperiously cried they to the crew, "Make way for Sir Magnus Lucy!"

"Behold, sir, your glorious name hath already manifested itself," said Ralph.

A rope-ladder was let down; and the brothers knelt, and inclined their bodies, and offered their hands to aid him in mounting. "Here are honors paid to my master!" said Roebuck, exultingly. Sir Magnus himself was highly gratified with his reception, and resolved to defer his interrogatory on the course they seemed to be taking. He was startled at dinner-time when the captain with strange familiarity entitled him, "Sir Mag." The following words were even more offensive: for when the ship rolled somewhat, though moderately, the trencher of Sir Magnus fell into his lap; and the captain cried "Nay, nay, Sir Mag! as much into gullet as gullet will hold, but clap nothing below the girdle." He protested he had no design to secrete anything. The sailors played and punned, as low men are wont, on his family name; and, on his asking what the fellows meant by their impudence, a scholar from Oxford of whom he inquired it, one who liked the logic of princes better than that of pedants, told him they wished to express by their words and gestures that he was, in the phrase of Horace, *ad unguem factus*.

"I do not approve of any phrases," answered he, somewhat proudly; "and pray, sir, tell them so."

"Sir!" said Roebuck in his ear, "although you may be somewhat disappointed in the measure of respect paid to you aboard, you will be compensated on landing."

Sir Magnus thought hereby that his tenants would surely bring him pullets and chines. As they approached the coast, "I told you, sir!" exclaimed he. Look at the bonfire on the very edge of the sands!—they could not make it nearer you." A fire was blazing, and there were loud *huzzas* as the ship entered the port.

"I would still be *incog.* if possible," said Sir Magnus, hollowing his cheeks and voice, and recovering to himself a great part of his own estimation. "Give the good men this money; and tell them in future not to burn a serviceable boat for me in want of brushwood. I will send them a cart-load of it another time, on due application."

The people were caulking a fishing-smack: they took the money, hooted at Sir Magnus, and turned again to their labor.

After the service of the day, the King of England was always pleased to watch the ships coming over, to observe the soldiers debarking, and to learn the names of the knights and esquires who successively crossed the channel. He happened to be riding at no great distance; and ordered one of his attendants to go and bring him information of the ship and her passengers, particularly as he had seen some stout horses put ashore. This knight was an intimate friend of De Arden the father, and laughed heartily at the adventure, as related by Humphrey. He repeated it to the king, word for word as nearly as he could. "Marry!" said the king; "three fat horses, with a bean-field (I warrant) in each, are but an inadequate price for such a name. I doubt whether we have another among us that was in any degree noble before the Norman conquest. We ourselves might have afforded three decent ones in recompense for the dominion and property of nearly one whole county, and that county the fairest in England. Let the boys make the knight show his prowess, as some of his family have done. I observe they ride well, and have the prudence to exercise their horses on their first debarking, lest they grow stiff and lose their appetite. Tell them I shall be glad to hear of them, and then to see them."

Sir Magnus, the moment he set foot on shore, was wel-

comed to land by Roebuck. "No, no! rogue Ralph!" said he, nodding. "I know the Avon when I see it. Here we are. None of your mummery, good people," cried he, somewhat angrily, when several ragged French—men, women, and children—asked him for charity. "We will have no Babel here, by God's blessing."

Soon came forward two young knights, and told him it was the king's pleasure he should pitch his tent above *Eu*, on the right of this same river *Brete*.

"Youngsters!" cried he arrogantly, "I shall pitch nothing; neither tent (whatever it may be), nor quoit, nor bar. Know ye, I am Sir Magnus Lucy, of Charlecote."

The young knights, unceremoniously as he had treated them, bowed profoundly and said they bore the king's command, leaving the execution of it to his discretion.

"The king's," repeated he. "What have I done? Has that skipping squirrel of an under-sheriff been at the king's ear about me?"

They could not understand him; and, telling him that it would be unbecoming in them to investigate his secrets, made again their obeisance, and left him. He then turned toward Ralph, the polar star in every ambiguity of his courses.

"Honored master, Sir Magnus!" answered Ralph, "let no strife be between us, nor ill blood, that alway maketh ill counsels boil uppermost in the pot."

"Roebuck!" said the knight, surveying him with silent admiration, "now speakest thou soundly and calmly; for thou hast taken time in the delivery thereof, and communed with thyself, before thou didst trust the least trustworthy of thy members. But I do surmise from thy manner, and from the thing spoken, that thou hast somewhat within thee which thou wouldst utter yet."

"Worshipful sir!" subjoined Ralph, "although I do not boast of my services—as who would?—yet, truth is truth. I have saved your noble neck from the gallows: forasmuch as you took a name, worshipful sir, which neither king nor father ever gave you, and which belongeth to others rightfully. Now if both the name and the horses had been found at once upon you, a miracle only could have saved you from that bloody-

minded under-sheriff. Providential was it for you, Sir Knight, that those two young gentlemen, whether in mercy they counterfeited the letter"—

"No, no, no! the priest's own brother wrote it: the priest deposed to the handwriting."

"Then," said Ralph, calmly, lifting up the palms of his hands towards Sir Magnus, "let us praise the Lord!"

"Hei-day? Ralph! why! art even thou grown devout? Verily this is a great mercy; a great deliverance. I doubt whether the best part of it (praised be the Lord nevertheless!) be not rather for thee, than for such a sinner as I am. For thou hast lost no horse; and yet art touched as if thou hadst lost a stud: thou hast not suffered in the flesh; and yet thy spirit is very contrite."

"Master!" said Ralph, "only one thing is quite plain to me; which is, that Almighty God decrees we should render our best services to our country. Your three horses followed you for idle pomp: vanity prompted you to appear what you are not."

"Very wrong, Ralph!"

"And yet, Sir Magnus, if you had not committed this action, which in your pious and reasonable humility you call very wrong, perhaps three gallant youths (for Sir Magnus Lucy by God's grace shall be the third) had remained at home in that sad idleness which leads to an unprivileged and tongue-tied old age. We are now in France"—

"Ralph! Ralph!" said Sir Magnus, "be serious still. Faith! I can hardly tell when thou art and when thou art not, being so unsteady a creature."

"Sir Magnus, I repeat it, we are now in Normandy or Picardy, I know not rightly which; where the king also is, and where it would be unseemly if any English knight were not. The eyes of England and of France are fixed upon us. Here we must all obey, the lofty as well as the humble."

"Obey? ay, to be sure, Ralph! Thou wilt obey me: thou art not great enough to obey the king; therefore set not thy heart upon it."

Ralph smiled and replied, "I offered my service to the young De Ardens, which they graciously accepted. As however they

have their own servants with 'em, if you, my honored master, can trust me, who have more than once deceived you, but never to your injury, I will with their permission continue to serve you, and that right faithfully. Whatever is wanting to the dignity of your appearance is readily purchased in this country, from the many traffickers who follow the camp, and from the great abundance of Normandy. So numerous too are the servants who have lost their masters, you may find as many as your rank requires, or your fortune can maintain. There are handier men among them than I am; and I do not ask of you any place of trust above my betters. Such as I am, either take me, Sir Magnus, or leave me with the two brave lads."

"Ralph!" answered the knight, "I cannot do without thee, since I am here; as it seems I am!" and he sighed. "About those servants that have lost their masters—I wish thou couldst have held thy peace. I would not fain have such unlucky varlets. But some of these masters, let us hope, may be found. Thou dost not mean they are dead; that is, killed!"

"Missing," said Ralph, consolatorily.

"I thought so: I corrected thee at the time. Now my three horses, the king being here, if thou speakest truth, I can have them up by *certiorari* at his Bench."

"They would be apt to leap it, I trow," replied Ralph, "with such riders upon their backs. Master, be easy about them!"

"Ismael is very powerful: he could carry me anywhere in reason," said Sir Magnus.

"Do not let the story get wind," answered his counsellor, "lest we never hear the end of it. I promise you, my worthy master, you shall have Ismael again after the wars."

"He will have longer teeth, and fewer marks in his mouth, before that time," said sorrowfully Sir Magnus.

"No bridle can hold him, when he is wilful," replied Ralph; "and although peradventure he might carry your worship clean through the enemy, once or twice, yet Ismael is not the horse to be pricked and goaded by pikes and arrows, without rearing and plunging, and kicking off helmets by the dozen, nine ells from the ground. Let those Staffordshire lads break him in and bring him home."

"Tell them so! tell them so!" said Sir Magnus, rubbing

his hands. "And find me one very strong and fleet, and very tractable, and that will do anything rather than plunge and rear at being pricked, if such bloody times should ever come over again in the world: for, as I never yet gave any man cause to mock at me, I will do my utmost to make all reverent of me, now I am near the king." Thus he spoke, being at last well aware that he was indeed in France; although he was yet perplexed in spirit in regard to his having been at Babel.

However, some time afterward he was likewise cured of this scepticism; as by degrees men will be on such points, if they seek the truth in humility of spirit. Conversing one day with Roebuck on past occurrences, he said, after a pause, "Ralph! I have confessed unto thee many things, as thou likewise hast confessed many unto me; the which manner of living and communing was very pleasant to the gentle saints, Paul and Timothy. And now I do indeed own that I have seen men in these parts beyond sea, and doubt not that there be likewise such in others, who in sundry matters have more of worldly knowledge than I have,—knowledge, I speak of, not of understanding. In the vanity of my heart, having at that time seen little, I did imagine and surmise that Babel lay wider of us; albeit I could not upon oath or upon honor say where or whereabout. It pleased the Lord to enlighten me by signs and tokens, and not to leave me for the scorn of the heathen and the derision of the ungodly. Had I minded his word somewhat more, when in my self-sufficiency I thought I had minded little else and knew it off-hand, I should have remembered that we pray every Sabbath for the peace of Jerusalem, and of Sion, and of Israel; meaning thereby (as the priest admonishes the simpler of the congregation) our own country, albeit other names have been given in these latter days to divers parts thereof. By the same token I might have apprehended that Babel lay at no vast distance."

Roebuck listened demurely, smacking his lips at intervals like a carp out of pond, and looking grave and edified. Tired however with this geographical discursion, burred and briared and braked with homilies, he reminded his master that no time was to be lost in looking for a gallant steed, worthy to bear a knight of distinction. "My father," said he, "made a song for himself,

in readiness at fair or market, when he had a sorry jade to dispose of:—

"'Who sells a good nag
On his legs may fag
Until his heart be weary.
Who buys a good nag,
And hath groats in his bag,
May ride the world over full cheery.'"

"Comfortable thoughts, both of 'em!" said Sir Magnus. "I never sold my nags: and I have groats enow,—if nobody do touch the same. Not knowing well the farms about this country, and the day being more windy than I could wish it, and proposing still to remain for awhile incognito, and being somewhat soiled in my apparel by the accidents of the voyage, and furthermore my eyes having been strained thereby a slight matter, it would please me, Roebuck, if thou wentest in search of the charger: the troublesome part of looking at his quarters, and handling him, and disbursing the moneys, I myself may, by God's providence, bring unto good issue."

Ralph accepted the commission, and performed it faithfully and amply. He returned with two powerful chargers, magnificently caparisoned, and told his master that he would grieve to the day of his death if he let either of them slip through his fingers. Sir Magnus first asked the prices, and then the names of them. He was informed that one was called Rufus, and the other Beauclerc, after two great English kings. Enquiring of Ralph the history of these English kings, and whether he had ever heard of them, and on the confession of Ralph in the negative, he was vexed and discontented, and told Ralph he knew nothing. The owner of the horses was very fluent in the history of the two princes, which nearly lost him his customer; for the knight shook his head, saying he should be sorry to mount a beast of such an unlucky name as Rufus: above all, in a country where arrows were so rife. As for Beauclerc, he was unexceptionable.

"A horse indeed!" cried Roebuck; "in my mind, sir! Ismael is not fit to hold a candle to him."

"I would not say so much as that," gravely and majestically replied the knight: "but this Beauclerc has his points, Roebuck." Sir Magnus purchased the two horses, and acquired into the bargain the two pages of history appertaining to their names;

which, proud as he was of displaying them on all occasions, he managed less dexterously. Before long he heard on every side the most exalted praises of Humphrey and Henry; and although he was by no means invidious, he attributed a large portion of the merit to Ismael, and appealed to Roebuck whether he did not once hear him say that Jacob too would show himself one day or other. Stimulated by the glory his horses had acquired, horses bred upon his own land, and by the notice they had attracted from our invincible Edward, under two mere striplings of half his weight, he himself within a week or fortnight was changed in character. Sloth and inactivity were no longer endurable to him. He exercised his chargers and himself in every practice necessary to the military career; and at last being presented to the king, Edward said to him that, albeit not being at Westminister, nor having his chancellor at hand, he could not legally enforce the payment of the three angels still due (he understood) as part of the purchase-money of sundry chargers, nevertheless he would oblige the gallant knight who bought them to present him on due occasion a pair of spurs for his acquittance.

The ceremony was not performed in the presence of the king, whose affairs required him elsewhere, but in the presence of his glorious son, after the battle of Cressy. Here Sir Magnus was surrounded, and perhaps would have fallen, being still inexpert in the management of his arms, when suddenly a young soldier, covered with blood, rushed between him and his antagonist, whom he levelled with his battle-axe, and fell exhausted. Sir Magnus had received many bruises through his armor, and noticed but little the event; many similar ones, or nearly so, having occurred in the course of the engagement. Soon however that quarter of the field began to show its herbage again in larger spaces; and at the distant sound of the French trumpets, which was shrill, fitful, and tuneless, the broken ranks of the enemy near him waved like a tattered banner in the wind, and melted, and disappeared. Ralph had fought resolutely at his side and, though wounded, was little hurt. The knight called him aloud: at his voice not only Ralph came forward, but the soldier who had preserved his life rolled round toward him. Disfigured as he was with blood and bruises, Ralph knew him again: it was Peter Crosby of the bulrush. Sir Magnus did not find immediately the

words he wanted to accost him: and indeed, though he had become much braver, he had not grown much more courteous, much more generous, or much more humane. He took him however by the hand, thanked him for having saved his life, and hoped to assist in doing him the same good turn.

Roebuck in the mean time washed the several wounds of his former friend and playmate, from a cow's horn containing wine; of which, as he had reserved it only against thirst in battle, few drops were left. Gashes opened from under the gore, which made him wish that he had left it untouched; and he drew in his breath, as if he felt all the pain he awakened.

"Well meant, Ralph! but prythee give over!" said Crosby, patiently. "These singings in my head are no merry-makings."

"Master!—if you are there—I would liefer have lain in Hampton churchyard among the skittles, or as near them as might be, so as not to spoil the sport; and methinks had it been a score or two of years later, it were none the worse. Howsoever, God's will be done! Greater folks have been eaten here by the dogs. Welladay, and what harm? Dogs at any time are better beasts than worms, and should be served first. They love us, and watch us, and help us while we are living: the others don't mind us while we are good for anything. There are chaps, too, and feeding in clover, who think much as they do upon that matter.

"Give me thy hand, Ralph! Tell my father I have done my best. If thou findest a slash or two athwart my back and loins, swear to him, as thou safely mayest do on all the Gospels, and on any bone of any martyr, that they closed upon me and gave them when I was cutting my way through—aweary with what had been done already—to lend my last service—to our worthy master."

Now, Messer Francesco, I may call upon you, having seen you long since throw aside your gravity, and at last spring up alert as though you would mount for Picardy.

Petrarca. A right indeed have you acquired to call upon me, Ser Geoffreddo; but you must accept from me the produce of our country. Brave men appear among us every age almost; yet all of them are apt to look to themselves: none will hazard his life for another; none will trust his best friend. Such is our

breed; such it always was. In affairs of love alone have we as great a variety as you have, and perhaps a greater. I am by nature very forgetful of light occurrences, even of those which much amused me at the time; and if your greyhound, Messer Geoffreddo, had not been laying his muzzle between my knees, urging my attention, shivering at the cold of this unmatted marble, and treading upon my foot in preference, I doubt whether you would ever have heard from me the story I shall now relate to you.

It occurred the year before I left Avignon; the inhabitants of which city, Messer Giovanni will certify, are more beautiful than any others in France.

Boccaccio. I have learned it from report, and believe it readily; so many Italians have resided there so long, and the very flower of Italy: amorous poets, stout abbots, indolent priests, high-fed cardinals, handsome pages, gigantic halberdiers, and crossbow-men for ever at the mark.

Petrarca. Pish! pish! let me find my way through 'em, and come to the couple I have before my eyes, and the spaniel that was the prime mover in the business.

Tenerin de Gisors knew few things in the world; and, if he had known all therein, he would have found nothing so valuable, in his own estimation, as himself. The ladies paid much court to him, and never seemed so happy as in his presence: this disquieted him.

Boccaccio. How the deuce! he must have been a saint then: which accords but little with his vanity.

Petrarca. You might mistake there, Giovanni! The observation does not hold good in all cases, I can assure you.

Boccaccio. Well, go on with him.

Petrarca. I do think, Giovanni, you tell a story a great deal more naturally; but I will say plainly what my own eyes have remarked, and will let the peculiarities of men appear as they strike me, whether they are in symmetry with our notions of character, or not.

Chaucer. The man of genius may do this: no other will attempt it. He will discover the symmetry, the relations, and the dependencies, of the whole: he will square the strange problematic circle of the human heart.

Pardon my interruption; and indulge us with the tale of Tenerin.

Petrarca. He was disquieted, I repeat, by the gayety and familiarity of the young women, who, truly to speak, betray at Avignon no rusticity of reserve. Educated in a house where music and poetry were cultivated, he had been hearing from his earliest days the ditties of broken hearts and desperation; and never had he observed that these invariably were sung under leering eyes, with smiles that turned every word upside-down, and were followed by the clinking of glasses, a hearty supper, and *what not!* Beside,[8] he was very handsome: men of this sort, although there are exceptions, are usually cold toward the women; and he was more displeased that they should share the admiration which he thought due to himself exclusively, than pleased at receiving the larger part of theirs.

At Avignon, as with us, certain houses entertain certain parties. It is thought unpolite and inconstant ever to go from one into another, I do not mean in the same evening, but in your lifetime; and only the religious can do it without reproach. As bees carry and deposit the fecundating dust of certain plants, so friars and priests the exhilarating tales of beauty, and the hardly less exhilarating of frailty, covering it deeply with pity, and praising the mercy of the Lord in permitting it for an admonition to others.

There are two sisters in our city (I forgot myself in calling Avignon so), of whom among friends I may speak freely, and may even name them: Cyrilla de la Haye, and Egidia. Cyrilla, the younger, is said to be extremely beautiful: I never saw her, and few beside the family have seen her lately. She is spoken of among her female friends as very lively, very modest, fond of reading and of music: added to which advantages, she is heiress to her uncle the Bishop of Carpentras, now invested with the purple. For her fortune, and for the care bestowed on her education, she is indebted to her sister, who, having deceived many respectable young men with hopes of marriage, was herself at last deceived in them, and bore about her an indication that deceived no one. During the three years that her father lived after this too domestic calamity, he confined her in a country-house, leaving her only the liberty of a garden, fenced with high

[8] From "Beside" to "theirs" (5 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

walls. He died at Paris; and the mother, who fondly loved Egidia, went instantly and liberated her, permitting her to return to Avignon, while she herself hid her grief, it is said, with young Gasparin de l'Œuf in the villa. Egidia was resolved to enjoy the first moments of freedom, and perhaps to show how little she cared for an unforgiving father. No one however at Avignon, beyond the family, had yet heard any thing of his decease. The evening of her liberation she walked along the banks of the Durance, with her favourite spaniel, which had become fat and unwieldy by its confinement and by lying all day under the southern wall of the garden, and, having never been combed nor washed, exhibited every sign of dirtiness and decrepitude. To render him smarter, she adorned him again with his rich silver collar, now fitting him no longer, and hardly by any effort to be clasped about his voluminous neck. He escaped from her, dragging after him the scarlet ribbon which she had formed into a chain, that it might appear the richer with its festoons about it, and that she might hold the last object of her love the faster. On the banks of the river he struggled with both paws to disengage the collar, and unhappily one of them passed through a link of the ribbon. Frightened and half-blind, he ran on his three legs he knew not whither, and tumbled through some low willows into the Durance. Egidia caught at the end of the ribbon; and, the bank giving way, she fell with him into deep water. She had, the moment before, looked in vain for assistance to catch her spaniel for her, and had cast a reproachful glance toward the bridge, about a hundred paces off, on which Tenerin de Gisors was leaning with his arms folded upon the battlement.

"Now," said he to himself, "one woman at least would die for me. She implored my pity before she committed the rash act,—as such acts are called on other occasions."

Without stirring a foot or unfolding an arm, he added pathetically from Ovid,—

> Sic, ubi fata vocant, udis abjectus in herbis,
> Ad vada Mæandri concinit albus olor.

We will not inquire whether the verses are the more misplaced by the poet, or were the more misapplied by the reciter. Tenerin now stepped forward, both to preserve his conquest

and add solemnity to his triumph. He lost however the opportunity of saving his mistress, and saw her carried to the other side of the river by two stout peasants, who had been purchasing some barrels in readiness for the vintage, and who placed her with her face downward, that the water might run out of her mouth. He gave them a *livre*, on condition that they should declare he alone had saved the lady; he then quietly walked up to his neck in the stream, turned back again, and assisted (or rather followed) the youths in conveying her to the monastery near the city-gate.

Here he learned, after many vain inquiries, that the lady was no other than the daughter of Philibert de la Haye. Perpetually had he heard in every conversation the praises of Cyrilla; of her beauty, her temper, her reserve, her accomplishments; and what a lucky thing for her was the false step of her sister, immured for life, and leaving her in sole expectation of a vast inheritance. Hastening homeward, he dressed himself in more gallant trim, and went forthwith to the Bishop of Carpentras, then at Avignon, to whom he did not find admittance, as his lordship had only that morning received intelligence of his brother-in-law's decease. He expressed by letter his gratitude to Divine Providence for having enabled him to rescue the loveliest of her sex from the horrors of a watery grave; announced his rank, his fortune (not indeed to be mentioned or thought of in comparison with her merits), and entreated the honor of a union with her, if his lordship could sympathize with him in feeling that such purity ought never to have been enfolded (might he say it?) in the arms of any man who was not destined to be her husband.

"Ah!" said the bishop when he had perused the letter, "the young man too well knows what has happened: who does not? The Holy Father himself hath shed paternal tears upon it. Providential this falling into the water: this endangering of a sinful life! May it awaken her remorse and repentance, as it hath awakened his pity and compassion! His proceeding is liberal and delicate: he could not speak more passionately and more guardedly. He was (now I find) one of her early admirers. No reference to others; no reproaches. True love wears well. I do not like this matter to grow too public. I will set out for Carpentras in another hour, first writing a few

lines, directing M. Tenerin to meet me at the palace this evening, as soon as may be convenient. We must forgive the fault of Egidia now she has found a good match; and we may put on mourning for the father, my worthy brother-in-law, next week."

Such were the cogitations and plans of the bishop, and he carried them at once into execution; for, knowing what the frailty of human nature is, as if he knew it from inspiration, he had by no means unshaken faith in the waters of the Durance as restorative or conservative of chastity.

Tenerin has been since observed to whistle oftener than to sing; and when he begins to warble any of his amatory lays, which seldom happens, the words do not please him as they used to do, and he breaks off abruptly. A friend of his said to him in my presence, "Your ear, Tenerin, has grown fastidious, since you walked up to it in the water on the first of August."

Boccaccio. Francesco! the more I reflect on the story you have related to us, the more plainly do I perceive how natural it is, and this too in the very peculiarity that appeared to me at first as being the contrary. Unless we make a selection of subjects, unless we observe their heights and distances, unless we give them their angles and shades, we may as well paint with white-wash. We do not want strange events, so much as those by which we are admitted into the recesses, or carried on amid the operations, of the human mind. We are stimulated by its activity, but we are greatly more pleased at surveying it leisurely in its quiescent state, uncovered and unsuspicious. Few, however, are capable of describing, or even of remarking it; while strange and unexpected contingencies are the commonest pedlery of the markets, and the joint patrimony of the tapsters.

I have drawn so largely from my brain for the production of a hundred stories, many of which I confess are witless and worthless, and many just as Ser Geoffreddo saw them, incomplete, that if my memory did not come to my assistance I should be mistrustful of my imagination.

Chaucer. Ungrateful man! the world never found one like it.[9]

Boccaccio. Are Englishmen so Asiatic in the profusion of compliments?

[9 First ed. reads: "it, and could not promise nor hold another such. *Boccaccio*," &c.]

I know not, Francesco, whether you may deem this cathedral a befitting place for narratives of love.

Petrarca. No place is more befitting; since, if the love be holy, no sentiment is essentially so divine; and if unholy, we may pray the more devoutly and effectually in such an audience for the souls of those who harbored it. Beside which, the coolness of the aisles and their silence, and their solitariness at the extremity of the city, would check within us any motive or tendency to lasciviousness and lightness, if the subject should lie that way, and if your spirits should incautiously follow it, my friend, Giovanni; as (pardon my sincerity!) they are somewhat too propense.

Boccaccio. My scruples are satisfied and removed.

The air of Naples is not so inclement as that of our Arezzo; and there are some who will tell us, if we listen to them, that few places in the world are more favorable and conducive to amorous inclinations. I often heard it while I resided there; and the pulpit gave an echo to the public voice. Strange then it may appear to you, that jealousy should find a place in the connubial state, and after a year or more of marriage: nevertheless, so it happened.

The Prince of Policastro was united to a lady of his own rank; and yet he could not be quite so happy as he should have been with her. She brought him a magnificent dowry; and I never saw valets more covered with lace, fringes, knots, and every thing else that ought to content the lordly heart, than I have seen behind the chairs of the Prince and Princess of Policastro. Alas! what are all the blessings of this sublunary world, to the lord whose lady has thin lips! The princess was very loving; as much after the first year as the prince was after the first night. Even this would not content him.

Time, Ser Geoffreddo, remembering that Love and he in some other planet flew together, and neither left the other behind, is angry to be outstripped by him, and challenges him to a trial of speed every day. The tiresome dotard is always distanced, yet always calls hoarsely after him; as if he had ever seen Love turn back again, any more than Love had seen him. Well, let them settle the matter between themselves.

Would you believe it?—the princess could not make her

husband in the least the fonder of her by all her assiduities; not even by watching him while he was awake, more assiduously than the tenderest mother ever watched her sleeping infant. Although, to vary her fascinations and enchantments, she called him wretch and villain, he was afterward as wretched and villanous as if she never had taken half the pains about him.

She had brought in her train a certain Jacometta, whom she persuaded to espy his motions. He was soon aware of it, and calling her to him, said,—

"Discreet and fair Jacometta, the princess, you know very well, thinks me inattentive to her; and being unable to fix on any other object of suspicion, she marks out you, and boasts among her friends that she has persuaded a foolish girl to follow and watch me, that she may at last, by the temptation she throws into our way, rid herself of a beauty who in future might give her great uneasiness. Certainly, if my heart could wander, its wanderings would be near home. I do not exactly say I should prefer you to every woman on earth, for reason and gratitude must guide my passion; and, unless where I might expect to find attachment, I shall ever remain indifferent to personal charms. You may relate to your mistress whatever you think proper of this conversation. If you believe a person of your own sex can be more attached and faithful to you than the most circumspect of ours, then repeat the whole. If on the contrary you imagine that I can be hereafter of any use to you, and that it is my interest to keep secret any confidence with which you may honor me, the princess has now enabled us to avoid being circumvented by her. It cannot hurt me: you are young, unsettled, incautious, and unsuspicious."

Jacometta held down her head in confusion: the prince taking her by the hand, requested her not to think he was offended. He persuaded her to let him meet her privately, that he might give her warning if any thing should occur, and that he might assist her to turn aside the machinations of their enemy. The first time they met, nothing had occurred: he pressed her hand, slipped a valuable ring on one of the fingers, and passed. The second time nothing material, nothing but what might be warded off: let the worst happen, the friend who gave him information of the designs laid against her would receive her. The princess

saw with wonder and admiration the earnestness with which Jacometta watched for her. The faithless man could hardly move hand or foot without a motion on the part of her attendant. She had observed him near the chamber-door of Jacometta, and laughed in her heart at the beguiled deceiver. "Do you know, Jacometta, I myself saw him within two paces of your bedroom!"

"I am quite confident it was he, madam!" answered Jacometta: "and I do believe in my conscience he comes every night. What[10] he wants I cannot imagine. He seems to stop before the tube-roses and carnations on the balustrade, whether to smell at them a little, or to catch the fresh breezes from Sorrento. I fancied at first he might be restless and unhappy (pardon me, madonna!) at your differences."

"No, no," said the princess, with a smile, "I understand what he wants: never mind, make no inquiries; he is little aware how we are planning to catch him. He has seen you look after him; he fancies that you care about him, that you really like him, absolutely love him,—I could almost laugh,—that you would (foolish man! foolish man! genuine Policastro!) listen to him. Do you understand?"

Jacometta's two ears reddened into transparency; and, clapping a hand on each, she cried, after a long sigh, "Lord! can he think of me? is he mad? does he take a poor girl for a princess? Generally I sleep soundly; but once or twice he has awakened me, perhaps not well knowing the passage. But if, indeed, he is so very wicked as to design to ruin me, and what is worse to deceive the best of ladies, might it not be advisable to fasten in the centre and in the sides of the corridor five, or six, or seven sharp swords, with their points toward whoever—"

"Jacometta! do nothing violently; nothing rashly; nothing without me."

There was only one thing that Jacometta wished to do without the princess; and certainly she was disposed to do nothing violently or rashly, for she was now completely in the interest (these holy walls forbid me to speak more explicitly) of Policastro.

"We will be a match for him," said the princess. "You must leave your room-door open to-night."

[10 From "What" to "princess" (15 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

Jacometta fell on her knees, and declared she was honest though poor,—an exclamation which I daresay, Messer Geoffreddo, you have often heard in Italy: it being the preface to every act of roguery and lubricity, unless from a knight or knight's lady. The Princess of Policastro was ignorant of this, and so was Jacometta when she used it. The mistress insisted; the attendant deprecated.

"Simple child! no earthly mischief shall befall you. To-night you shall sleep in my bed, and I in yours, awaiting the false wretch miscalled my husband."

Satisfied with the ingenuity of her device, the princess was excessively courteous to the prince at dinner, and indeed throughout the whole day. He on his part was in transports, he said, at her affability and sweet amiable temper. Poor Jacometta really knew not what to do: scarcely for one moment could she speak to the prince, that he might be on his guard.

"Do it! do it!" said he, pressing her hand as she passed him. "We must submit."

At the proper time he went in his slippers to the bedroom of the princess, and entered the spacious bed; which, like the domains of the rich, is never quite spacious enough for them. Jacometta was persuaded to utter no exclamation in the beginning, and was allowed to employ whatever vehemence she pleased at a fitter moment. The princess tossed about in Jacometta's bed, inveighing most furiously against her faithless husband; her passionate voice was hardly in any degree suppressed. Jacometta too tossed about in the princess's bed, and her voice labored under little less suppression. At last the principal cause of vexation, with the jealous wife, was the unreasonable time to which her husband protracted the commission of his infidelity. After two hours or thereabout, she began to question whether he really had ever been unfaithful at all; began to be of the opinion that there are malicious people in the world, and returned to her own chamber. She fancied she heard voices within, and listening attentively, distinguished these outcries:—

"No resistance, madam! An injured husband claims imperatively his promised bliss, denied him not through antipathy, not through hatred, not through any demerits on his part, but through unjust and barbarous jealousy. Resist! bite! beat me! 'Villain'

—'ravisher'—am I? am I? Excruciated as I am, wronged, robbed of my happiness, of my sacred conjugal rights, may the Blessed Virgin never countenance me, never look on me or listen to me, if this is not the last time I ask them, or if ever I accept them though offered."

At which, he rushed indignantly from the bed, threw open the door, and, pushing aside the princess, cried raving, "Vile, treacherous girl! standing there, peeping! half-naked! At your infantine age dare you thus intrude upon the holy mysteries of the marriage-bed?"

Screaming out these words, he ran like one possessed by the devil into his own room, bolted the door with vehemence, locked it, cursed it, slipped between the sheets, and slept soundly.

The princess was astonished: she asked herself, Why did not I do this? why did not I do that? The reason was, she had learned her own part, but not his. Scarcely had she entered her chamber, when Jacometta fell upon her neck, sobbing aloud, and declaring that nothing but her providential presence could have saved her. She had muffled herself up, she said, folding the bed-clothes about her double and triple, and was several times on the point of calling up the whole household in her extremity, strict as was her mistress's charge upon her to be silent. The princess threw a shower of odoriferous waters over her, and took every care to restore her spirits and to preserve her from a hysterical fit, after such exertion and exhaustion. When she was rather more recovered, she dropped on her knees before her lady, and entreated and implored that, on the renewal of her love in its pristine ardor for the prince, she never would tell him in any moment of tender confidence that it was she who was in the bed.

The princess was slow to give the promise; for she was very conscientious. At last however she gave it, saying, "The prince my husband has taken a most awful oath never to renew the moments you apprehend. Our Lady strengthen me to bear my heavy affliction! Her divine grace has cured my agonized breast of its inveterate jealousy."

She paused for some time; then, drying her tears, for she had shed several, she invited Jacometta to sit upon the bedside with her. Jacometta did so; and the princess, taking her hand,

continued: "I hardly know what is passing in my mind, Jacometta! I found it difficult to bear an injury, though an empty and unreal one; let me try whether the efforts I make will enable me to endure a misfortune,—on the faith of a woman, my dear Jacometta, no unreal nor empty one. Policastro is young: it would be unreasonable in me to desire he should lead the life of an anchorite, and perhaps not quite reasonable in him to expect the miracle of my blood congealing."

After this narration, Messer Francesco walked toward the high altar and made his genuflexion: the same did Messer Giovanni, and, in the act of it, slapped Ser Geoffreddo on the shoulder, telling him he might dispense with the ceremony, by reason of his inflexible boots and the buck-skin paling about his loins. Ser Geoffreddo did it nevertheless, and with equal devotion. His two friends then took him between them to the house of Messer Francesco, where dinner had been some time waiting.

XV. BARROW AND NEWTON.[1]

Newton. I come, sir, before you with fear and trembling, at the thoughts of my examination to-morrow. If the masters are too hard upon me, I shall never take my degree. How I passed

[1 Landor must suppose this Conversation to have taken place in 1668, the day before Newton went up for his master's degree. He was then twenty-seven years of age, and had completed the more important part of his studies. Barrow was then Lucasian professor of Geometry, He had used Newton's skill in the revision of his Lectiones Opticæ, and had acknowledged the benefit his book had received from Newton's corrections and additions. In the following year Barrow resigned his professorship to Newton, and for the rest of his life devoted himself almost entirely to theology. In the *Critical Review*, June 8, 1808, there is an article of Dr Parr's, in which occurs (p. 118) an eulogy on Barrow, "Within the grasp of his mighty and capacious mind were comprehended the broad generalities which are discussed in science, and the minuter discriminations which are to be learned only by familiarity with common life. At one moment he soars aloft to the great, without any exhaustion of his vigour, and in the next, without any diminution of his dignity, he descended to the little—he drew his materials from the richest treasures of learning, ancient and modern, sacred and profane—he sets before us in solemn and magnificent array, the testimony of historians, the criticisms of scholars, the arguments

as bachelor I cannot tell: it must surely have been by especial indulgence.

Barrow. My dear Isaac! do not be dispirited. The less intelligent of the examiners will break their beaks against the gravel, in trying to cure the indigestions and heartburnings your plenteousness has given them; the more intelligent know your industry, your abilities, and your modesty: they would favor you, if there were need of favor, but you, without compliment, surpass them all.

Newton. Oh sir! forbear, forbear! I fear I may have forgotten a good deal of what you taught me.

Barrow. I wonder at that. I am older than you by many years; I have many occupations and distractions; my memory is by nature less retentive: and yet I have not forgotten any thing *you* taught *me*.

Newton. Too partial tutor, too benevolent friend! this unmerited praise confounds me. I cannot calculate the powers of my mind, otherwise than by calculating the time I require to compass any thing.

Barrow. Quickness is among the least of the mind's properties, and belongs to her in almost her lowest state: nay, it doth not abandon her when she is driven from her home, when she is wandering and insane. The mad often retain it; the liar has it, the cheat has it; we find it on the race-course and at the card-table: education does not give it, and reflection takes away from it.

Newton. I am slow; and there are many parts of ordinary learning yet unattained by me.

Barrow. I had an uncle, a sportsman, who said that the light dog beats over most ground, but the heavier finds the covey.

Newton. Oftentimes indeed have I submitted to you problems and possibilities—

Barrow. And I have made you prove them.

Newton. You were contented with me; all may not be.

Barrow. All will not be: many would be more so if you could prove nothing. Men, like dogs and cats, fawn upon you

of metaphysicians, the description of poets, the profound remarks of heathen sages, and the pious reflections of Christian fathers." (Imag. Convers., v., 1829. Works, i., 1846. Works, iv., 1876.)]

while you leave them on the ground; if you lift them up they bite and scratch; and if you show them their own features in the glass, they would fly at your throat and tear your eyes out. This between ourselves; for we must not indulge in unfavourable views of mankind, since by doing it we make bad men believe that they are no worse than others, and we teach the good that they are good in vain. Philosophers have taken this side of the question to show their ingenuity; but sound philosophers are not ingenious. If philosophy can render us no better and no happier, away with it! There are things that can; and let us take them.

What dost thou sigh at, Isaac?

Newton. At my ignorance, in some degree, of their writings.

Barrow. At your ignorance of the ignorant? No man ever understood the things that are most admired in Plato and Aristoteles. In Plato there are incoherencies that fall to pieces at a touch; and Aristoteles lost himself in the involutions of his own web. What must we think of a philosopher, who promised to teach one pupil that which he withheld from the rest, although these were more familiar with him and more instructed? And what must we think of a pupil, who was indignant that any others should partake in his sentiments and his knowledge? Yet such men have guided the scientific, such men have ruled the world.

Newton. Not such was Bacon.

Barrow. No, indeed. I told you, and I repeat it, I think the small volume of *Essays* in your hand contains more wisdom and more genius than we can find in all the philosophers of antiquity; with one exception, Cicero. On which I desired you to peruse it attentively, and to render me an account of it according to your opinion.

Newton. Sir, I have been induced to believe, but rather from the authority of my elders than from my own investigation, that Bacon is the more profound of the two, although not the more eloquent.

Barrow. If Bacon had written as easily and harmoniously as Cicero, he would have lost a portion of his weight with the generality of the learned, who are apt to conceive that in easy movement there is a want of solidity and strength.[2] We must

[2 First ed. reads: "strength. Take away all Cicero's wit and half his eloquence, and you leave a Bacon at bottom. Very wise," &c.]

confess that antiquity has darkened colleges and has distorted criticism. Very wise men, and very wary and inquisitive, walk over the earth, and are ignorant not only what minerals lie beneath, but what herbs and foliage they are treading. Some time afterward, and probably some distant time, a specimen of ore is extracted and exhibited; then another; lastly the bearing and diameter of the vein are observed and measured. Thus it is with writers who are to have a currency through ages. In the beginning they are confounded with most others; soon they fall into some secondary class; next, into one rather less obscure and humble; by degrees they are liberated from the dross and lumber that hamper them; and, being once above the heads of contemporaries, rise slowly and waveringly, then regularly and erectly, then rapidly and majestically, till the vision strains and aches as it pursues them in their ethereal elevation.

Neither you nor I have wasted our time in the cultivation of poetry; but each of us hath frequently heard it discoursed on by those who have; and, if it serves for nothing else, it serves for an illustration. In my early days, he would have been scoffed out of countenance who should have compared the *Lycidas*, or the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, of Mr John Milton to the sterling poetry (as it was called) of Dr John Donne: and yet much may be said in favor of the younger; and there are those, and not only undergraduates, but bachelors and masters, who venture even to prefer him openly. Who knows but we may see him extolled to the level of Lucan and Statius, strong as is the sense of the University against all sorts of supplanters! There are eyes that cannot see print when near them; there are men that cannot see merit.

Newton. The Latin secretary may be pardoned for many defects in his poetry, and even for many in his politics, in consideration of the reverence he bore toward the *Apocalypse*. I cannot think him a very irreligious man, although he does not attend divine service, we are told, so regularly as we could have wished.

Barrow. Let us talk no more about him. I opposed his principles: nevertheless he may have acted conscientiously; and even his principles are now coming again into fashion, and among the sons of those very cavaliers who would have hanged him. Perhaps the most dangerous of his doctrines, the lawfulness of

setting aside God's anointed for misconduct, may soon be the leading one in the front of our Constitution. Well! we are not met for politics: only it would be salutary to consider, if God's anointed will not be set aside, what must be done,—how avoid the commission of a diabolical act.

Newton. Could we rightly understand the *Revelation*, I question not but every difficulty of this nature would be solved.

Barrow. May be: let us trust in God.

Newton. We must have certain *data* for every thing upon which we reason: the greater part of reasoners begin without them.

Barrow. I wish the event may answer your expectations; that the *Apocalypse*, the *Argonautic Expedition*, and the *Siege of Troy*, form the trident which is to push away our difficulties in navigating through all the rocks and shoals of time,—all those of religion, and all those of history. Happen what may, I doubt nothing of your surpassing the foremost of your competitors,—of your very soon obtaining a name in the University little below Doctor Spry's of Caius, Doctor Brockhouse's of St John's, Doctor Cockburn's of Emanuel, Doctor Turnbull's of Peterhouse, or Doctor Cruikshank's of Bennet; nay, a name which, within a few years, may reach even to Leyden and Paris, as that of a most studious young man, distinguished alike for application and invention.

Newton. Although I could not in conscience disclaim the small merit there may be in application, since I owe it to the encouragement of my tutor, I surely have no right or title to invention.

Barrow. You have already given proofs of it beyond any man I know. Your questions lead to great discoveries; whether it please God that you hereafter make them, or some one following you, is yet uncertain. We are silly enough to believe that the quality of invention, as applied to literature, lies in poetry and romance, mostly or altogether. I dare to speculate on discoveries in the subjects of your studies, every one far greater, every one far more wonderful, than all that lie within the range of fiction. In our days, the historian is the only inventor; and it is ludicrous to see how busily and lustily he beats about, with his string and muzzle upon him. I wish we could drag him for a moment

into philosophical life: it would be still more amusing to look at him, as he runs over this loftier and dryer ground, throwing up his nose and whimpering at the prickles he must pass through.

Few men are contented with what is strictly true concerning the occurrences of the world: it neither heats nor soothes. The body itself, when it is in perfect health, is averse to a state of rest. We wish our prejudices to be supported, our animosities to be increased; as those who are inflamed by liquor would add materials to the inflammation.

Newton. The simple verities, important perhaps in their consequences, which I am exploring, not only abstract me from the daily business of society, but exempt me from the hatred and persecution to which every other kind of study is exposed. In poetry, a good pastoral would raise against one as vehement enemies as a good satire. A great poet in our country, like the great giant in Sicily, can never move without shaking the whole island; while the mathematician and astronomer may pursue their occupations, and rarely be hissed or pelted from below. You spoke of historians: it would ill become a person of my small experience to discourse on them after you.

Barrow. Let me hear, however, what you have to say, since at least it will be dispassionate.

Newton. Those who now write history do certainly write it to gratify a party, and to obtain notoriety and money. The materials lie in the cabinet of the statesman, whose actions and their consequences are to be recorded. If you censure them, you are called ungrateful for the facilities he has afforded you; and, if you commend them, venal. No man, both judicious and honest, will subject himself to either imputation.

Barrow. Not only at the present day, but always, the indulgence of animosity, the love of gain, and the desire of favor have been the inducements of an author to publish in his lifetime the history of his contemporaries. But there have been, and let us hope there may be, judicious and virtuous men, so inflamed by the glory of their country in their days, that, leaving all passions and prejudices, they follow this sole guide, and are crowned by universal consent for commemorating her recent exploits.

Newton. Here are reasons enough for me rather to apply my mind as you direct it, than to the examination of facts which never

can be collected by one person; or to poetry, for which I have no call; or to the composition of essays, such as those of Montaigne and Bacon; or dialogues, such as those of Cicero and Plato, and, nearer our times, of Erasmus and Galileo. You had furnished me before with arguments in abundance; convincing me that, even if I could write as well as they did, the reward of my labors would be dilatory and posthumous.

Barrow. I should entertain a mean opinion of myself, if all men or the most-part praised and admired me: it would prove me to be somewhat like them. Sad and sorrowful is it to stand near enough to people for them to see us wholly; for them to come up to us and walk round us leisurely and idly, and pat us when they are tired and going off. That lesson which a dunce can learn at a glance, and likes mightily, must contain little, and not good. Unless it can be proved that the majority are not dunces,—are not wilful, presumptuous, and precipitate,—it is a folly to care for popularity. There are indeed those who must found their fortunes upon it; but not with books in their hands. After the first start, after a stand among the booths and gauds and prostitutes of party, how few have lived contentedly, or died calmly! One hath fallen the moment when he had reached the last step of the ladder, having undersawed it for him who went before, and forgotten that knavish act; another hath wasted away more slowly, in the fever of a life externally sedentary, internally distracted; a third, unable to fulfil the treason he had stipulated, and haunted by the terrors of detection, snaps the thread under the shears of the Fates, and makes even those who frequented him believe in Providence.

Isaac! Isaac! the climbing plants are slender ones. Men of genius have sometimes been forced away from the service of society into the service of princes; but they have soon been driven out, or have retired. When shall we see again, in the administration of any country, so accomplished a creature as Wentworth,* the favorite of Charles? Only light men recover false steps: his greatness crushed him. Aptitude for serving princes is no proof

* He far excelled in energy and capacity the other councillors of Charles; but there was scarcely a crueller or (with the exception of his master) a more perfidious man on either side. Added to which, he was wantonly oppressive, and sordidly avaricious.

or signification of genius, nor indeed of any elevated or extensive knowledge. The interests of many require a multiplicity of talents to comprehend and accomplish them. Mazarin and Richelieu were as little able as they were little disposed to promote the well-being of the community; both of them had keen eyes, and kept them on one object,[3]—aggrandizement. We find the most trivial men in the streets pursuing an object through as many intricacies, and attaining it; and the schemes of children, though sooner dropped, are frequently as ingenious and judicious. No person can see more clearly than you do the mortifications to which the ambitious are subject; but some may fall into the snares of ambition whose nature was ever averse to it, and whose wisdom would almost reach any thing, and only seems too lofty to serve them watchfully as a guard. It may thus happen to such as have been accustomed to study and retirement, and fall unexpectedly on the political world by means of recommendations. There are those, I doubt not, who would gladly raise their name and authority in the State by pushing you forward, as the phrase is, into Parliament. They seize any young man who has gained some credit at college, no matter for what, whether for writing an epigram or construing a passage in Lycophron; and, if he succeeds to power, they and their family divide the patronage. The ambitious heart is liable to burst in the emptiness of its elevation: let yours, which is sounder, lie lower and quieter. Think how much greater is the glory you may acquire by opening new paths to science, than by widening old ones to corruption. I would not whisper a syllable in the ear of faction; but the words of the intelligent, in certain times and on certain occasions, do not vary with parties and systems. The royalist and republican meet: the difference lies merely in the intent, the direction, and the application. Do not leave the wise for the unwise, the lofty for the low, the retirement of a college for the turbulence of a House of Commons. Rise, but let no man lift you: leave that to the little and to the weak. Think within yourself, I will not say how impure are the sources of election to our Parliament, but how inconsiderable a distinction is conferred on the representative, even where it is not an individual who nominates, or only a few who appoint him, but where several

[3] First ed. reads: "the aggrandizement of their master. We," &c.]

hundreds are the voters. For who are they, and who direct them?—the roughest bear-guard, the most ferocious bull-baiter, the most impudent lawyer, the tinker that sings loudest, and the parson that sits latest at the ale-house, hitting them all by turns with his tobacco-pipe, calling them all sad dogs, and swearing till he falls asleep he will hear no more filthy toasts. Show me the borough where such people as these are not the most efficient in returning a candidate to Parliament; and then tell me which of them is fit to be the associate—it would be too ludicrous to say the patron—of a Euclid or an Archimedes? My dear Newton! the best thing is to stand above the world; the next is to stand apart from it on any side. You *may* attain the first; in trying to attain it, you are certain of the second.

Newton. I am not likely to be noticed by the great, nor favored by the popular. I have no time for visiting: I detest the strife of tongues; all noises discompose me.

Barrow. We will then lay aside the supposition. The haven of philosophy itself is not free at all seasons from its gusts and swells. Let me admonish you to confide your secrets to few: I mean the secrets of science. In every great mind there are some: every deep inquirer hath discovered more than he thought it prudent to avow, as almost every shallow one throws out more than he hath well discovered. Among our learned friends, we may be fully and unreservedly philosophical; in the company of others we must remember, first and chiefly, that discretion is a part of philosophy, and we must let out only some glimpses of the remainder.

Newton. Surely no harm can befall us from following a chain of demonstrations in geometry, or any branch of the mathematics.

Barrow. Let us hope there may be none; nevertheless we cannot but recollect how lately Galileo was persecuted and imprisoned for his discoveries.

Newton. He lived under a popish government.

Barrow. My friend! my friend! all the most eminently scientific, all the most eminently brave and daring in the exercise of their intellects, live, and have ever lived, under a popish government. There are popes in all creeds, in all countries, in all ages. Political power is jealous of intellectual;

often lest it expose and mar its plans and projects, and oftener lest it attract an equal share of celebrity and distinction. Whenever the literary man is protected by the political, the incitement to it is the pride of patronage; not the advancement of letters, nor the honor they confer on the cultivator or the country.

Newton. That is rational in England which beyond the Alps is monstrous. By God's blessing, I firmly believe in the *Holy Scriptures;* yet, under your discretion and guidance, I would be informed if[4] the sun's rays in Syria could ever be above the horizon for twenty-four hours, without a material alteration, without an utter derangement, of our whole mundane system? *

Barrow. Reserve that question for a future time and a wiser teacher. At present, I would only remark to you that our mundane system *has* been materially altered; and that its alterations may have been attributed to other causes than the true, and laid down by different nations as having taken place at different epochs and on different occasions, sometimes to gratify their pride, sometimes to conceal their ignorance.

Newton. I am not quite satisfied.

Barrow. Those who are quite satisfied sit still and do nothing; those who are not quite satisfied are the sole benefactors of the world.

[[4] First ed. reads: "if the sun could stand stiller at one time than at another; and if his rays," &c. The footnote refers to the case of Thomas Aikenhead, who was executed in Scotland in the year 1696 for denying the Trinity. See Macaulay, Hist. Eng., chapter xxii., for the whole disgraceful story. Le Clerc received from Loche a letter, written by Newton, on two texts in the Greek Testament, the first of which, 1 John v., vii., is the celebrated text about the "three witnesses." Like every other scholar of repute Newton denied its authenticity. Le Clerc was to have published a French translation of the letter, but Newton, hearing of it, wrote to Loche to stop the publication. Le Clerc at the time did not know that Newton was the author, and it was not till some time after that he discovered this and brought out a version of the letter in a slightly altered form.]

* Newton was timid and reserved in expressing his opinions, and was more orthodox (in the Anglican sense of orthodoxy) early in life than later. What he thought at last is not clear; and perhaps it was well for him that it was no clearer. Under his eyes, in the reign of William III., a youth of eighteen was punished with death for expressing such opinions as our philosopher hinted to Le Clerc. To remove and consume the gallows on which such men are liable to suffer is among the principal aims and intents of these writings.

Newton. And are driven out of it for their pains.

Barrow. Men seldom have loved their teachers.

Newton. How happens it, then, that you are loved so generally; for who is there, capable of instruction, that you have not taught? Never, since I have been at the University, have I heard of any one being your enemy who was not a Calvinist,—a sect wherein good-humored and gracefully-minded men are scanty.

Barrow. Do not attribute the failing to the sect, which hath many strong texts of Scripture for its support; but rather think that the doctrines are such as are most consentaneous to the malignant and morose. There are acrid plants that attract as many insects as the sweeter, but insects of another kind. All substances have their commodities, all opinions their partisans. I have been happy in my pupils; but in none of them have I observed such a spirit of investigation as in you. Keep it, however, within the precincts of experimental and sure philosophy, which are spacious enough for the excursions of the most vigorous mind, and varied enough for the most inconstant and flighty. Never hate, never dislike men, for difference of religion. Some receive baleful impressions in it more easily than others, as they do diseases. We do not hate a child for catching the small-pox, but pity its sores and blemishes. Let the Calvinist hate us: he represents his God as a hater, he represents him as capricious. I wish he would love us, even from caprice; but he seems to consider this part of the Divine nature as a weakness.

Come, unroll your paper; let me hear what you have to say on Bacon's *Essays*,—a volume I place in the hand of those only who appear to me destined to be great.

Newton. He says in his Preface,—

"I do now publish my *Essays*, which of all my *other*[5] works have been most current."

How can the very thing of which you are speaking be *another?*

Barrow. This is a chasm in logic, into which many have fallen.

Newton. I had scarcely begun the first Essay, when an elderly gentleman of another college came into the room, took up the book, and read aloud,—

"This same truth is a naked and open daylight, that doth not

[5 Bacon wrote, "of all my works."]

show the masks and mummeries and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candle-lights. Truth may, perhaps, come to the price of a pearl, that showeth best by day; but it will not rise to the price of a diamond or carbuncle, that showeth best in varied lights. A mixture of a lie doth ever add pleasure. Doth any man doubt that, if there were taken out of men's minds vain opinions, flattering hopes, false valuations, imaginations as one would, and the like, but it would leave the minds of a number of men poor shrunken things, full of melancholy and indisposition, *and unpleasing to themselves?*"

"One might well imagine," said he, "unpleasing to themselves, *if* full of melancholy and indisposition. But how much of truth and wisdom is compressed in these few sentences! Do not you wonder that a man capable of all this should likewise be capable of such foolery as the following:—

"First he breathed light upon the face of the matter, or chaos; then he breathed light into the face of man; and still he *breatheth and inspireth* light into the face of his chosen."

I looked with wonder at him, knowing his seriousness and gravity, his habits and powers of ratiocination, and his blameless life. But perhaps I owe to his question the intensity and sedulity with which I have examined every page of Bacon. He called the words I have quoted dull and colourless bombast; he declared them idle in allusion, and false and impious. I was appalled. He added, "I do not know, Mr Newton, whether you have brothers: if you have, what would you think of your father when he gave a cherry to one, a whipping to a second, and burned the fingers of a third against the bars of his kitchen grate, and vouchsafed no better reason for it than that he had resolved to do so the very night he begot them? Election in such a case is partiality; partiality is injustice. Is God unjust?"

I could have answered him, by God's help, if he had given me time; but he went on, and said: "Bacon had much sagacity, but no sincerity; much force, but no firmness. It is painful to discover in him the reviler of Raleigh, the last relic of heroism in the dastardly court of James. It is horrible to hear him, upon another occasion, the apologist of a patron's disgrace and death,—the patron, whose friendly hand had raised him to the first steps of the highest station."

"Sir," answered I, "his political conduct is not the question before us."

"It may, however," said he, "enlighten us in regard to his candour, and induce us to ask ourselves whether, in matters of religion, he delivered his thoughts exactly, and whether he may not have conformed his expression of them to the opinions of his master."

Barrow. I hope you dropped the discussion after this.

Newton. No; I cried resolutely, "Sir, when I am better prepared for it, I may have something to say with you on your irreverent expressions."

Barrow. Mr Newton, do not be ruffled. Bacon spoke figuratively; so did Moses, to whom the illusion was made. Let the matter rest, my dear friend.

Newton. I told him plainly he was unfair: he was no friend to Bacon. He smiled at me and continued: "My good Newton, I am as ready to be told when I am unfair as you are to have your watch set right when it goes amiss. You say I am no friend to Bacon; and in truth, after the experience he left us in the Earl of Essex, he is not precisely the man to place one's friendship on. Yet surely no folly is greater than hatred of those we never saw, and from whom we can have received no injury. Often do I wonder when I hear violent declamations against theories and opinions; which declamations I think are as ill-directed as they would be against currents of air or watercourses. We may keep out of their way if we will. I estimate the genius of Bacon as highly as perhaps you do, and in this Essay I find a single sentence which I would rather have written than all the volumes of all the Greek philosophers; let me read it: 'Certainly, it is heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of truth.'"

Barrow. Magnificent as Shakspeare!

Newton. He who wrote tragedies?

Barrow. The same: I have lately been reading them.

Newton. Sir, should you have marked the truths he demonstrated, if any, I shall think it no loss of time to run over them, at my leisure. I have now a question to ask you on the third of these Essays. We find in it that "Quarrels and divisions about religion were evils unknown to the heathen: the reason was,

because the religion of the heathen consisted rather in rites and ceremonies than in constant belief." This is no truer of the old Paganism than of the later in the same country, which however burns men alive for slight divergencies.

"You may imagine," says Bacon, "what kind of faith theirs was, when the chief doctors and fathers of their church were the poets."

I read this loudly and triumphantly to my friend, who paused and smiled, and then asked me complacently whether it were better to imprison, burn, and torture, or to send away the audience in good humor and good fellowship; and whether I should prefer the conversation and conviction of Doctor Bonner and Doctor Gardiner to those of Doctor Tibullus and Doctor Ovid. I thought the question too flippant for an answer, which indeed was not quite at hand. He proceeded: "'God has this attribute, that he is a jealous God, and therefore his worship and religion will endure no mixture.' His jealousy must be touched to the quick," said my friend: "for every century there comes forth some new pretender, with his sect behind him in the dark passages; and his spouse was hardly at her own door after the nuptials, ere she cried out and shrieked against the filthiness of an intruder."

I was lifting up my eyes and preparing an ejaculation, when he interrupted me, and continued: "'It is certain that heresies and schisms are *of all others* the greatest scandals; yea, more than corruption of manners: for, as in the natural body a wound, or solution of continuity, is worse than a corrupt humor'—"

Here he laid down the volume, and said, "I will ask the professor of surgery whether a cut in the finger is worse than a scrofula: I will then go to the professor of divinity, and ask him whether the best Christian in Cambridge ought to be hanged to-morrow morning."

I stared at him: whereupon he declared that every church on earth is heretical and schismatical, if the word of Christ is the foundation of the true; and that the fellow who was hanged last week for *corruption of manners* had, according to the decision of Bacon, more Christianity in him than all the heads of colleges. "When he would follow theologians," said my friend, "he falls into gross absurdities: he corrects himself, or only trips harmlessly, when he walks alone."

I myself was obliged to agree with my disputant, in censuring an exception. Speaking of *sanguinary persecutions to force consciences*, the author blames them, "except it be in cases of *overt scandal, blasphemy*, &c." Now who shall decide what is *overt scandal*, or what is *blasphemy?* That which is prodigiously so in one age and one country is not at all in another. Such exceptions are the most pernicious things a great author can sanction.

Barrow. I side with you. We come now, I perceive, to the Essay *On Revenge.*

Newton. "There is no man doth a wrong for the wrong's sake, but thereby to purchase himself profit, or pleasure, or honor, *or the like:* therefore why should I be angry with a man for loving himself better than me?"

If this be an excuse, why send a rogue to prison? All the crimes that men commit are committed because they love themselves better than others; and it is the direction and extent of this loving, to the detriment of others, that constitutes the magnitude of the crime. Cruelty is the highest pleasure to the cruel man: it is his love. Murder may ensue; and shall we not be *angry with him* for loving himself better than the murdered?

On Simulation and Dissimulation, we are told, "The best composition and temperature [6] is to have a power to feign, if there be no remedy."

Barrow. In other words, to lie whenever we find it convenient. The last two decisions you have reported from him as little become the chancellor as the philosopher; as little the philosopher as the citizen. Why will you not read on?

Newton. I am afraid to mention the remark of my visitor on a sentence in the Essay *Upon Goodness.*

Barrow. Fear not: what is it?

Newton. "The desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall."

Barrow. This is a sin the most rarely of all committed in our days. If the earth is to be destroyed by fire, the bottom of a rushchair will serve to consume all who are guilty of it; and what falls from heaven may fall upon other offenders.

[6 Bacon wrote: "temperature is to have openness in fame and opinion secrecy in habit; dissimulation in seasonable use, and a power," &c.]

Newton. "Do you believe," said my friend, "that God punished men for wishing to be wiser? for wishing to follow him and to learn his pleasure? for wishing that acquisition by which beneficence and charity may be the most luminously and extensively displayed? No, Newton, no! The Jews, who invented this story, were envious of the scientific; for they were ignorant of the sciences. Astronomy, among the rest, was odious to them; and hence the fables stuck against the Tower of Babel, the observatory of a better and a wiser people, their enemy, their conqueror. Take care, or you may be hanged for shooting at the stars. If these fictions are believed and acted on, you must conceal your telescope and burn your observations."

On my representing to him the effects of divine justice in casting down to earth the monument of human pride, he said: "The Observatory of Babylon was constructed of unbaked bricks, and upon an alluvial soil. Look at the Tower of Pisa; look at every tower and steeple in that city: you will find that they all lean, and all in one direction, that is, toward the river. Some have fallen; many will fall. God would not have been so angry with the Tower of Babel, if it had been built of Portland stone a few weeks' journey to the westward, and you had been as importunate as the Babylonians were in their attempt at paying him a visit."

He expressed his wonder that Bacon, in the reign of James, should have written, "A[7] king is the servant of his people, *or else he were without a calling.*" In other words, whenever he ceases to be the *servant of the people*, he forfeits his right to the throne.

Barrow. Truth sometimes comes unaware upon caution, and sometimes speaks in public as unconsciously as in a dream.

Newton. Sir, although you desired me rather to investigate and note the imperfections of my author than what is excellent in him, as you would rather the opaquer parts of the sun than what is manifest of his glory to the lowest and most insensible, yet,

[7 Landor is here quoting from a spurious essay, entitled, "Of a King." (*See* Spedding's Bacon, 1858, vol. vi., p. 595.) The passage reads: "To conclude, as hee is of the greatest power, so hee is subject to the greatest cares, made the servant of his people, or else he were without a calling at all."]

from the study of your writings, and from the traces of your hand in others, I am sometimes led to notice the beauties of his style. It requires the greatest strength to support such a weight of richness as we sometimes find in him. The florid grows vapid where the room is not capacious, and where perpetual freshness of thought does not animate and sustain it. Unhappily, it seems to have been taken up mostly by such writers as have least invention.

Barrow. Read to me the sentence or the paragraph that pleases you.

Newton. 'Tis *On Envy* :—

"Lastly, near kinsfolks and fellows in office, and those that have been bred together, are more apt to envy their equals when they are raised; for it doth upbraid unto them their own fortunes, and pointeth at them, and cometh oftener into their remembrance, and incurreth likewise more into the note of others; and envy ever redoubleth from speech and fame."

Barrow. Very excellent. I wish, before he cast his invectives against Raleigh, he had reflected more on a doctrine in the next page: "Those that have joined with their honor great travels, cares, or perils, are less subject to envy: for men think that they earn their honors hardly, and pity them sometimes; and pity ever healeth envy." I am afraid it will be found, on examination, that Bacon in his morality was too like Seneca; not indeed wallowing in wealth and vice and crying out against them, but hard-hearted and hypocritical; and I know not with what countenance he could have said, "By[8] indignities men come to dignities."

Newton. I have remarked with most satisfaction those sentences in which he appears to have forgotten both the age and station wherein he lived, and to have equally overlooked the base and summit of our ruder institutions. "Power to do good," says he, as Euripides or Phocion might have said, and Pericles might have acted on it, "is the true and lawful end of aspiring; for good thoughts, though God accept them, yet towards men are little better than good dreams except they be put in act; and

[8 This quotation and the three following are from the essay, "Of Great Place." In the third quotation the correct reading is, "of the ancient time."]

that cannot be without power and place, as the vantage and commanding ground."

And again: "Reduce things to the first institution, and observe wherein and how they have degenerated! But yet ask counsel of both times; *of the ancienter time what is best*, and of the latter time what is fittest."

Barrow. He spoke unadvisedly; for, true as these sentences are, they would lead toward republicanism, if men minded them. Of this, however, there is as little danger as that the servants of kings should follow the advice he gives afterward:—

"Embrace and invite helps and advices touching the execution of thy place; and do not drive away such as bring thee information, as meddlers, but accept of them in good part."

Newton. *On Seditions*, he says the matter is of "two kinds; much poverty and much discontentment." It appears to me that here is only one kind: for much discontentment may spring, and usually does, from much poverty.

Barrow. Certainly. He should not have placed cause and effect as two causes. You must however have remarked his wonderful sagacity in this brief Essay, which I hesitate not to declare the finest piece of workmanship that ever was composed on any part of government. Take Aristoteles and Machiavelli, and compare the best sections of their works to this, and then you will be able, in some degree, to calculate the superiority of genius in Bacon.

Newton. I have not analyzed the political works of Aristoteles; but I find in Machiavelli many common thoughts, among many ingenious, many just,[9] many questionable, and many false ones.

Barrow. What are you turning over? Do not let me lose any thing you have remarked.

Newton. "Money," says my lord, "is like muck; not good except it be spread." I am afraid this truth would subvert, in the mind of a reflecting man, all that has been urged by the

[9 First ed. reads: "just, and more perverse ones. Let the following serve for instances: and I hasten the sooner to the exposition of them, that I may raise no objection against any part of a treatise which you have commended so unexceptionally. *Barrow.* Nay, be candid with me and bring forward your objection. *Newton.* Money," &c.]

learned author on the advantages of nobility, and even of royalty; for which reason I dare not examine it: only let me, sir, doubt before you whether "this is to be done by suppressing, or at the least keeping a straight hand upon, the devouring trades of usury, engrossing, great pasturages, *and the like.*

Barrow. I wish he never had used, which he often does, those silly words, *and the like.*

Newton. *Great pasturages* are not *trades;* and they must operate in a way directly opposite to the one designated.

Barrow. I know not whether a manifest fault in reasoning be not sometimes more acceptable than stale and worm-eaten and weightless truths. Heaps of these are to be found in almost every modern writer: Bacon has fewer of them than any.

Nicholas Machiavelli is usually mentioned as the deepest and acutest of the Italians: a people whose grave manner often makes one imagine there is more to be found in them than they possess. Take down that volume: read the examples I have transcribed at the end:—

"The loss of every devotion and every religion draws after it infinite inconveniences and infinite disorders."

Inconveniences and disorders would follow, sure enough: the losses, being negatives, *draw* nothing.

"In a well-constituted government, war, peace, and amity should be deliberated on, not for the gratification of a few, but for the common good."

"That war is just which is necessary."

"It is a cruel, inhuman, and impious thing, even in war, *stuprare le donne, viziare le vergini,*" &c.

"Fraud is detestable in every thing."

These most obvious truths come forward as if he had now discovered them for the first time. He tells us also that, "A prince ought to take care that the people are not without food." He says with equal gravity that, "Fraud is detestable in every thing;" and that, "A minister ought to be averse from public rapine, and should augment the public weal."

It would be an easy matter to fill many pages with flat and unprofitable sentences. I had only this blank one for it; and there are many yet, the places of which are marked with only the first words. Do not lose your time in looking for them: we must not judge of him from these defects.

Newton. Whenever I have heard him praised, it was for vigor of thought.

Barrow. He is strongest where he is most perverse. There are men who never show their muscles but when they have the cramp.

Newton. Consistency and firmness are not the characteristics of the Florentines, nor ever were. Machiavelli wished at one time to satisfy the man of probity, at another to conciliate the rogue and robber; at one time to stand on the alert for the return of liberty, at another to sit in the portico of the palace, and trim the new livery of nascent princes. If we consider him as a writer, he was the acutest that had appeared since the revival of letters. None had reasoned so profoundly on the political interests of society, or had written so clearly or so boldly.

Barrow. Nevertheless, the paper of a boy's cracker, when he has let it off, would be ill-used by writing such stuff upon it as that which you have been reading. The great merit of Machiavelli, in style, is the avoiding of superlatives. We can with difficulty find an Italian prose-writer who is not weak and inflated by the continual use of them, to give him pomp and energy, as he imagines.

Newton. Davila, too, is an exception.

Barrow. The little elegance there is among the Italians is in their historians and poets: the preachers, the theologians, the ethic writers, the critics, are contemptible in the last degree. Well; we will now leave the *Issimi* nation, and turn homeward.

You will find that Bacon, like all men conscious of their strength, never strains or oversteps.[10] While the Italians are the same in the church and in the market-place, while the preacher and policinello are speaking in the same key and employing almost the same language, while a man's God and his rotten tooth are treated in the same manner,—we find at home convenience and proportion. Yet the French have taken more pains than we have done to give their language an edge and polish; and, although we have minds in England more massy

[10 First ed. reads: "oversteps, and is frugal in the use of superlatives; while the Italians," &c.]

and more elevated than theirs, they may claim a nearer affinity to the greater of the ancients.

I have been the less unwilling to make this digression, as we are now come nigh the place where we must be slow and circumspect. The subject awes and confounds me. Human reason is a frail guide in our disquisitions on royalty, which requires in us some virtue like unto faith. We cannot see into it clearly with the eyes of the flesh or of philosophy, but must humble and abase ourselves to be worthy of feeling what it is. For want whereof, many high and proud spirits have been turned aside from it by the right hand of God, who would not lead them into its lights and enjoyments because they came as questioners, not as seekers; would have walked when they should have stood, and would have stood when they should have knelt.

Newton. Sir, I do not know whether you will condescend to listen with patience to the thoughts excited in me by Bacon's observations on the character of a king.

Barrow. He shocked me by what he said before on the fragility of his title: God forbid that common men should talk like the Lord High Chancellor!

Newton. I was shocked in a contrary direction, and as it were by a repercussion, at hearing him call a king a *mortal God on earth*:[11] and I do not find anywhere in the Scriptures that "the living God told him he should die like a man, lest he should be proud, and flatter himself that God had, with his name, imparted unto him his nature also."

Surely, sir, God would repent as heartily of having made a king, as we know he repented of having made a man, if it were possible his king should have turned out so silly and irrational a creature. However vain and foolish, he must find about him, every day, such natural wants and desires as could not appertain to a God. I made the same remark to my visitor, who said calmly: "Bacon in the next sentence hath a saving grace; and speaketh as wisely and pointedly as ever he did. He says, 'Of all kind of men, God is the least beholden to them; for he doth

[11 The quotations in this and the following two paragraphs are from the Essay "Of a King" (see note 7). The correct reading is, "a mortal God on earth unto whom the living God hath lent his own name as a great honor, but withal told him," &c. (Spedding's Bacon, p. 595.)]

most for them, and they do ordinarily least for him.' A sentence not very favorable to their admission as pastors of the people, and somewhat strong against them as visible heads of the Church. But, Mr Newton, you will detect at once a deficiency of logic in the words, 'That king that holds not religion the best reason of state is void of all piety and justice, the supporters of a king.' Supposing a king soundly minded and well educated,—a broad supposition, and not easily entering our preliminaries,—may not he be just, be pious, be religious, without holding his religion as the best reason of state, or the best guide in it? Must he be void of *all* piety, and *all* justice, who sometimes thinks other reasons of state more applicable to his purposes than religion? Psalms and sack-cloth are admirable things; but these, the last expedients of the most contrite religion, will not always keep an enemy from burning your towns and violating your women, when a few pieces of cannon, and loftiness of spirit instead of humiliation, will do it."

He went on, and asserted that the king is not the sole fountain [12] of honor, as he is called in the Essay, and cannot be more fairly entitled so than the doctors in convocation. He remarked that the king had not made him master of arts; which dignity, he said, requires more merit than the peerage: whereupon he named several in that order, of whose learning or virtues I never heard mention, and even of whose titles I thought I never had until he assured me I must, and expressed his wonder that I had forgotten them. When he came to the eighth section,—"he is the life of the law,"—"the law leads a notoriously bad life," said he, "and therefore I would exempt his Majesty from the imputation: and indeed if 'he animateth the dead letter, making it active toward all his subjects,' the parliament and other magistratures are useless. In the ninth paragraph he makes some accurate observations, but ends weakly. 'He that changeth the fundamental laws of a kingdom thinketh there is no good title to a crown but

[12 See preceding note. The following passages read: "The fountain of honor, which should not run a waste-pipe lest the courtiers sell the waters and then (as Papists say of their Holy Wells) to lose the vertue." "He is the life of the law, not only as he is *lex loquens* himself, but because he animateth the dead letter, making it active towards all his subjects." (p. 595.)]

by conquest.' What! if he changes them from the despotic to the liberal?—if, knowing the first possession to have been obtained by conquest, he convokes the different orders of his people, and requests their assent to the statutes he presents? Nothing can be more pedantic than the whole of the sixteenth section."

Barrow. But there are sound truths in it, and advice too good to be taken every day.

Newton. On Nobility:—

"A great and potent nobility . . . putteth life and spirit into the people, *but presseth their fortune.*"

"The man must have turned fool," said my friend, "to write thus. Are life and spirit put into people by the same means as their fortune is depressed?"

On Atheism:—

"'The fool hath said in his heart there is no God.' It is not said, 'The fool hath *thought* in his heart.'"

No, nor is it necessary; for to say *in his heart*, is to think *within himself;* to be *intimately convinced.*

"It appeareth in nothing more, that atheism is rather in the lip than in the heart of man, than by this,—that atheists will ever be talking of that their opinion as if they fainted in it themselves, and would be glad to be strengthened by the consent of others: nay more, you shall have atheists strive to get disciples, as it fareth with other sects."

So great is my horror at atheists, that I would neither reason *with* them nor about them; but surely they are as liable to conceit and vanity as other men are, and as proud of leading us captive to their opinions. I could wish the noble author had abstained from quoting Saint Bernard to prove the priesthood to have been, even in those days, more immoral than the laity; and I am shocked at hearing that "*learned times*," especially with peace and prosperity, tend toward atheism. Better blind ignorance, better war and pestilence and famine—

Barrow. Gently, gently! God may forgive his creature for not knowing him when he meets him; but less easily for fighting against him, after talking to him and supping with him; less easily for breaking his image, set up by him at every door,—and such is man; less easily for a series of fratricides,—and such is war.

Newton. I am wrong: and here again let me repeat the strange paradox of my visitor, rather than hazard another fault. In the words about *Superstition* he agreed that Bacon spoke wisely:—

"It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of him; for the one is unbelief, the other is contumely."

"And here," remarked my visitor, "it is impossible not to look back with wonder on the errors of some among the wisest men, following the drift of a distorted education, or resting on the suggestions of a splenetic disposition. I am no poet, and therefore am ill qualified to judge the merits of the late Mr Milton in that capacity; yet, being of a serious and somewhat of a religious turn, I was shocked greatly more at his deity than at his devil. I know not what interest he could have in making Satan so august a creature, and so ready to share the dangers and sorrows of the angels he had seduced. I know not, on the other hand, what could have urged him to make the better ones so dastardly that, even at the voice of their Creator, not one among them offered his service to rescue from eternal perdition the last and weakest of intellectual beings. Even his own Son sat silent, and undertook the mission but slowly; although the trouble was momentary if compared with his everlasting duration, and the pain small if compared with his anterior and future bliss. Far be it from me," cried he—

Barrow. Did he cry so?—then I doubt whatever he said; for those are precisely the words that all your sanctified rogues begin their lies with. Well, let us hear however what he asserted.

Newton. "Far be it from me, Mr Newton, to lessen the merits of our Divine Redeemer. I, on the contrary, am indignant that poets and theologians should frequently lean toward it."

Barrow. Did he look at all indignant?

Newton. He looked quite calm.

Barrow. Ha! I thought so. I doubt your friend's sincerity.

Newton. He is a very sincere man.

Barrow. So much the worse.

Newton. How?

Barrow. We will discourse another time upon this. I

meant only,—what we may easily elucidate when we meet again. At present we have three-fourths of the volume to get through.

Newton. "Atheism leaves a man to sense, to philosophy, to natural piety, to laws, to reputation: all which may be guides to an outward moral virtue, though religion were not; but superstition dismounts all these, and erecteth an *absolute monarchy* in the minds of men: therefore atheism did never perturb States."

Again: "We see the times inclined to atheism as the times of Augustus Cæsar were civil times: but superstition hath been the confusion of many States."

I wish the noble author had kept to himself the preference he gives atheism over superstition; for, if it be just, as it seems to be, it follows that we should be more courteous and kind toward an atheist than toward a loose Catholic or rigid sectary.

Barrow. I see no reason why we should not be courteous and kind toward men of all persuasions, provided we are certain that neither by their own inclination nor by the instigation of another they would burn us alive to save our souls, or invade our conscience for the pleasure of carrying it with them at their girdles.

Atheism would make men have too little to do with others: superstition makes them wish to have too much. Atheism would make some fools: superstition makes many madmen. Atheism would oftener be in good humor than superstition is out of bad. I could bring many more and many stronger arguments in support of Bacon, and the danger would be little in adducing them; for the current runs violently in a contrary direction, and will have covered every thing with slime and sand before atheism can have her turn against it.

Newton. If *atheism did never perturb States*, as Bacon asserts, then nothing is more unjust than to punish it by the arm of the civil power. It was impolitic in him to remind the world that it was peaceful and happy for sixty years together, while those who ruled it were atheists; when we must acknowledge that it never has been happy or peaceful for so many days at a time, under the wisest and most powerful (as they call the present one)

of the *Most Christian* kings. For if the observation and the fact be true, and if it also be true that the most rational aim of man is happiness, then must it follow that his most rational wish, —and, being his most rational, therefore his most innocent and laudable,—is the return of such times.

Barrow. We will go forward to the Essay *On Empire.*

Newton. I do not think the writer is correct in saying that "kings . . . want matter of desire." Wherever there is vacuity of mind, there must either be flaccidity or craving; and this vacuity must necessarily be found in the greater part of princes, from the defects of their education, from the fear of offending them in its progress by interrogations and admonitions, from the habit of rendering all things valueless by the facility with which they are obtained, and transitory by the negligence with which they are received and holden.

"Princes many times make themselves desires, and set their hearts upon toys,—sometimes upon a building; sometimes upon erecting of an order; . . . sometimes upon obtaining excellency in some art or feat of the hand."

On which my visitor said, "The latter desire is the least common among them. Whenever it does occur, it arises from idleness, and from the habitude of doing what they ought not. For, commendable as such exercises are in those who have no better and higher to employ their time in, they are unbecoming and injurious in kings; all whose hours, after needful recreation and the pleasures which all men share alike, should be occupied in taking heed that those under them perform their duties."

Barrow. Bacon lived in an age when the wisest men were chosen, from every rank and condition, for the administration of affairs. Wonderful is it that one mind on this subject should have pervaded all the princes in Europe, not excepting the Turk; and that we cannot point out a prime minister of any nation, at that period, deficient in sagacity or energy.* Yet

* There is a remark in a preceding Essay, which could not be noticed in the text:—

"As for the acquaintance which is to be sought in travel, that which is most of all profitable is acquaintance with the *secretaries and employed men* of embassadors; for so, in travelling in one country, he shall suck the experience of many."

This, whatever it may appear to us, was not ludicrous nor sarcastic

that even the greatest, so much greater than any we have had since among us, did not come up to the standard he had fixed, is evident enough.

"The wisdom," says he, "of *all these latter times* in princes' affairs, is rather fine deliveries, and *shifting of dangers and mischiefs* when they are near, than solid and grounded courses to keep them aloof: but this is but to try masteries with fortune. And let men beware how they neglect and suffer matter of trouble to be prepared; for no man can forbid the spark, nor tell whence it may come."

Newton. Sir, it was on this passage that my friend exclaimed, "The true philosopher is the only true prophet. From the death of this, the brightest in both capacities, a few years opened the entire scroll of his awful predictions. Yet age after age will the same truths be disregarded, even though men of a voice as deep and a heart less hollow should repeat them. Base men must raise new families, though the venerable edifice of our Constitution be taken down for the abutments, and broken fortunes must be soldered in the flames of war blown up for the occasion."

On this subject he himself is too lax and easy. Among the reasons for legitimate war he reckons the *embracing of trade.* He seems unwilling to speak plainly, yet he means to signify that we may declare war against a nation for her prosperity; a prosperity raised by her industry, by the honesty of her dealings, and by excelling us in the quality of her commodity, in the exactness of workmanship, in punctuality, and in credit.

Barrow. Hell itself, with all its jealousy and malignity and falsehood, could not utter a sentence more pernicious to the interests and improvement of mankind. It is the duty of every State to provide and watch that not only no other in its vicinity, but that no other with which it has dealings immediate or remoter, do lose an inch of territory or a farthing of wealth by aggression. Princes fear at their next door rather the example of good than of bad. Correct your own ill habits, and you need not dread your rival's. Let him have them, and wear them every day,—if indeed a Christian may propose it,—and they will unfit him for competition with you.

when Bacon wrote it, but might be applied as well to the embassadors and secretaries of England as of other States.

Newton. I now come to the words *On Counsel:* "The doctrine of Italy, and practice of France, in some kings' times, hath introduced *cabinet counsels;* a remedy worse than the disease."

Cabinet—council! It does indeed seem a strange apposition. One would sooner have expected *cabinet cards* and *counters*, *cabinet miniature pictures*,—or what not!

Barrow. Isaac! if you had conversed, as I have, with some of those persons who constitute such councils, you would think the word *cabinet* quite as applicable to them as to cards or counters, or miniature pictures, or essences, or pots of pomatum.

Newton. How, then, in the name of wonder, are the great matters of government carried on?

Barrow. Great dinners are put upon the table, not by the entertainer, but by the waiters. There are usually some dexterous hands accustomed to the business. The same weights are moved by the same ropes and pulleys. There is no vast address required in hooking them, and no mighty strength in the hauling.

Newton. I have taken but few notes of some admirable things in my way to the Essay *On Cunning*.

Barrow. I may remind you hereafter of some omissions in other places.

Newton. I find Bacon no despiser of books in men of business, as people mostly are.

Barrow. Because they know little of them, and fancy they could manage the whole world by their genius. This is the commonest of delusions in the shallows of society. Well doth Bacon say, "There be that can pack the cards and yet cannot play well; so there are some that are good in canvasses and factions that are otherwise weak men."

Fortunate the country that is not the dupe of these intruders and bustlers, who often rise to the highest posts by their readiness to lend an arm at every stepping-stone in the dirt, and are found as convenient in their way as the candle-snuffers in gaming-houses, who have usually their *rouleau* at the service of the half-ruined.

Newton. I am sorry to find my Lord High Chancellor wearing as little the face of an honest man as doth one of these.

Barrow. How so?

Newton. He says, "If a man would cross a business, that he doubts some other would handsomely and effectually move, let

him pretend to wish it well, and move it himself in such sort as may foil it."

What must I think of such counsel?

Barrow. Bacon, as I observed before, often forgets his character. Sometimes he speaks the language of truth and honesty, with more freedom than a better man could do safely; again, he teaches a lesson of baseness and roguery to the public, such as he could intend only for the private ear of some young statesman, before his rehearsal on the stage of politics. The words from the prompter's book have crept into the text, and injure the piece. Bacon might not have liked to cancel the directions he had given so much to his mind; instead of which, he draws himself up and cries austerely, "But these small wares and petty points of cunning are infinite, and it were a good deed to make a list of them; for nothing doth more hurt in a State than that cunning men pass for wise."

Newton. He has other things about wisdom in another place: "Of the wisdom for a man's self."

Barrow. I must repeat one noble sentence; for I fear, if you begin to read it, I may interrupt you, not being master of my mind when his comes over it. "Divide with reason between self-love and society; and be so true to thyself as thou be not false to others, especially to thy king and country. It is a poor centre of a man's actions, himself: it is right earth; for that only stands fast upon his own centre; whereas all things that have affinity with the heavens move upon the centre of another, which they benefit."

What an imagination is Bacon's; what splendid and ardent language! In what prose-writer of our country, or of Rome, or of Greece, is there any thing equal or similar to it!

Newton. On Innovations I find the sentence which I have heard oftener quoted than any in the volume: "Time is the greatest innovator."

We take the axiom up without examination; it is doubtful and inconsiderate. Does it mean much time or little time? By a *great* innovator we must either signify an innovator in great matters, or in many at once, or nearly at once. Now time is slow in innovation of any kind; and all great innovations are violences, as it were, done to time, crowding into a small space what would in

ordinary cases occupy a larger. Time, without other agents, would innovate little; for the portions of time are all the same, and, being so, their forces must be the same likewise.

Barrow. That satisfies me.

Newton. Truth and falsehood are the two great innovators, always at work, and sometimes the one uppermost and sometimes the other.

Barrow. Let us engage ourselves in the service of truth, where the service is not perilous; and let us win time to help us, for without him few cannot stand against many.

Newton. *On Friendship* there are some things which sit loose upon the subject. The *utility* of it seems to be principally in the view of Bacon. Some positions are questionable: —

"Certain it is that whosoever hath his mind fraught with many thoughts, his wits and understanding do clarify and break up in the communicating and discoursing with another; he tosseth his thoughts more easily; he marshalleth them more orderly; he seeth how they look when they are turned into words; finally, he waxeth wiser than himself, and that more by an hour's discourse than by a day's meditation."

This I conceive is applicable to one frame of mind, but not to another of equal capacity and elasticity. I admire the ingenuity of the thought, and the wording of it; nevertheless I doubt whether it suits not better the mind of an acute lawyer than of a contemplative philosopher. Never have I met with any one whose thoughts are *marshalled more orderly* in conversation than in composition; nor am I acquainted in the University with any gentleman of fluent speech, whose ideas are not frequently left dry upon the bank. Cicero and Demosthenes were laborious in composition, and their replies were, I doubt not, as much studied as their addresses. For it was a part of the orator to foresee the points of attack to which his oration was exposed, and to prepare the materials, and the arrangement of them, for defending it.

"It was well said by Themistocles to the king of Persia, that speech was like cloth of *Arras*," &c.

Themistocles might as well have spoken of velvet of Genoa and satin of Lyons.

On Expense there is much said quite worthy of Bacon's experience and prudence; but he lays down one rule which I think I can demonstrate to be injurious in its tendency: —

"If a man will keep but of even hand, his ordinary expenses ought to be but to the half of his receipts; and if he think to wax rich, but to the third part."

Should all private gentlemen, and others who are not gentlemen, but whose income is of the same value, spend only the third part of it, the nation would be more nearly ruined within the century, than it would be if every one of them mortgaged his property to half its amount.

A wiser saying comes soon afterward, where he speaks *On the True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates*:—

"No people overcharged with tribute is fit for empire."

How happy, my dear sir, is our condition, in having been ever both generous and thrifty, ready at all times to succor the oppressed, and condescending on this holy occasion to ask the countenance of none! How happy, to have marched straight forward in the line of duty with no policy to thwart, no penury to enfeeble, and no debt to burthen us! Although our nobility is less magnificent than in the reign of the Tudors, I do verily believe it is as free and independent; and its hospitality, so conducive (as Bacon says) to martial greatness, is the same as ever, although the quality of the guests be somewhat changed.

Barrow. Isaac! are you serious?

Newton. Dear sir, the subject animates me.

Barrow. What sparkles is hardly more transparent than what is turbid. Your animation, my friend, perplexed me. I perceive you are vehemently moved by the glory of our country.

Newton. As we derive a great advantage from the nature of our nobility, so do we derive an equal one from the dispositions and occupations of the people. How unfortunate would it be for us, if we had artisans cooped up like tame pigeons in unwholesome lofts, bending over the loom by tallow-light, and refreshing their exhausted bodies at daybreak with ardent liquors! Indeed, in comparison with this, the use of slaves itself, which Bacon calls a great advantage, was almost a blessing.

Barrow. Let us not speculate on either of these curses, which may not be felt as such when they come upon us, for we shall be stunned and torpified by the greatness of our fall.

What have you next?

Newton. *On Suspicion* I find an Italian proverb, which the

learned author has misconstrued. "Sospetto licenzia fede" he translates, "Suspicion gives a passport to faith." The meaning is (my visitor tells me), "Suspicion dismisses fidelity." "Licenziare un servitore," is, *to dismiss a servant.* That the person suspected is no longer bound to fidelity, is the axiom of a nation in which fidelity is readier to quit a man than suspicion is.

It cost me many hours of inquiry to search into the propriety of his thoughts *Upon Ambition.* He says: "It is counted by some a weakness in princes to have favorites; but it is *of all others* the best remedy against ambitious great ones: for when the way of pleasuring and displeasuring lieth by the favorite, it is impossible any other should be overgreat."

I hope, and am willing to believe, that my Lord Chancellor Bacon was a true and loyal subject; yet one would almost be tempted to think, in reading him, that there must be a curse in hereditary princes, and that he had set his private mark upon it when he praises their use of favorites, and supposes them surrounded by mean persons and ambitious ones, by poisons and counterpoisons. Sejanus and Tigellinus, our Gavestons and Mortimers, our Empsons and Dudleys, our Wolseys and Buckinghams, are like certain fumigations to drive away rats; which indeed do drive them out, but also make the house undesirable to inhabit. He recommends "the continual interchange of favors and disgraces, whereby they may not know what to expect, and be, as it were, in a wood."

Barrow. By the effect of this policy, we find the countenances of the statesmen and courtiers who lived in his age, almost without exception, mean and suspicious. The greatest men look, in their portraits, as if they were waiting for a box on the ear; lowering their heads, raising their shoulders, and half-closing their eyes, for the reception of it.

Newton. What he says *Of Nature in Men* seems spoken by some one who saw through it from above: the same *On Custom and Education.* Here he speaks with more verity than consolation, when he says: "There[13] be not two more fortunate properties, than to have a little of the fool and not too much of the honest: therefore extreme lovers of their country were never

[13 The passage is from the Essay "Of Fortune."]

fortunate; neither can they be; for when a man placeth his thoughts without himself, he goeth not his own way."

In the Essay *On Youth and Age*, what can be truer, what can be more novel or more eloquent, than this sentence:—

"Men of age object too much, consult too long, adventure too little, repent too soon, and seldom drive business home to the full period, but content themselves with a mediocrity of success."

What he says *Of Beauty* is less considerate.

Barrow. I do not wonder at it: beauty is not stripped in a Court of Chancery, as fortune is.

Newton. He is inconsequent in his reasoning when he says: "There is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion. A man cannot tell whether Apelles or Albert Durer were the more trifler, *whereof* the one would make a personage by geometrical proportions; the other, by taking the best parts out of divers faces to make one excellent."

Barrow. *Whereof* is of *which*, not of *whom*.

Newton. If "there is no excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion," then Apelles was no trifler in taking the best parts of *divers faces*, which would produce *some strangeness in the proportion* unless he corrected it.

Barrow. True: Bacon's first remark, however, is perfectly just and novel. What strikes us in beauty is that which we did not expect to find from anything we had seen before: a new arrangement of excellent parts. The same thing may be said of genius, the other great gift of the Divinity, not always so acceptable to his creatures; but which however has this advantage, if you will allow it to be one, that, whereas beauty has most admirers at its first appearance, genius has most at its last, and begins to be commemorated in the period when the other is forgotten.

Newton. What you said of beauty, as striking us chiefly in being unexpected from any thing we had seen before, is applicable no less to ugliness.

Barrow. I am not giving a definition, but recording an[14] observation, which would be inexact without the remaining words, —"*a new* arrangement of excellent parts."

Newton. Our author errs more widely than before; not, as

[[14] First ed. reads: "recording a fact. *Newton.* One," &c.]

before, in drawing a false conclusion. "Such personages," he continues to remark, "I think would please nobody but the painter who made them: not but I think a painter may make a better face than ever was; but he must do it by a kind of felicity (as a musician that maketh an excellent air in music) and not by rule." Nothing of excellent is to be done by felicity.

Barrow. Felicity and excellence rarely meet, and hardly know one another.

Newton. Certainly no musician ever composed *an excellent air* otherwise than by rule: felicity is without it.

Barrow. Beauty does not seem to dazzle but to deaden him. He reasons that the principal part of beauty lies in *decent motion*, and asserts that "no youthy person can be comely but by pardon, and by considering the youth as to make up the comeliness." Much of this reflection may have been fashioned and cast by the age of the observer; much by the hour of the day: I think it must have been a rainy morning, when he had eaten unripe fruit for breakfast!

Newton. Perhaps sour grapes.

On Deformity I have transcribed a long sentence: here he seems more at home:—

"Because there is in man an election touching the frame of his mind, and a necessity in the frame of his body, the stars of natural inclination are sometimes obscured by the sun of discipline and virtue; therefore it is good to consider of deformity, not as a sign which is most deceivable, but as a cause which seldom faileth of the effect."

Nothing can be truer in all its parts, or more magnificent in the whole.

Barrow. This short Essay is worth many libraries of good books. Several hundreds of esteemed authors have not in them the substance and spirit of the sentence you recited.

Newton. *On Building* he says: "Houses are built to live in, and not to look on."

Half of this is untrue. Sheds and hovels, the first habitations (at least the first artificial ones) of men, were built to live in, and not to look on; but houses are built for both: otherwise why give directions for the proportions of porticos, of columns, of intercolumniations, and of whatever else delights the beholder in

architecture, and flatters the possessor? Is the beauty of cities no honor to the inhabitants, no excitement to the defence? External order in visible objects hath relation and intercourse with internal propriety and decorousness. I doubt not but the beauty of Athens had much effect on the patriotism, and some on the genius, of the Athenians. Part of the interest and animation men receive from Homer lies in their conception of the magnificence of Troy. Even the little rock of Ithaca rears up its palaces sustained by pillars; and pillars are that portion of an edifice on which the attention rests longest and most complacently. For we have no other means of calculating so well the grandeur of edifices, as by the magnitude of the support they need; and it is the only thing about them which we measure in any way by our own.

"Neither do I reckon it an ill seat only where the air is unwholesome, but likewise where the air is unequal: as you shall see many fine seats set upon a knap of ground, environed with higher hills round about it, whereby the heat of the sun is pent in, and the wind gathereth as in troughs," &c.

Now surely this very *knap of ground* is the very spot to be chosen for the commodiousness of its situation, its salubrity, and its beauty. There is as little danger of the wind gathering in these *troughs* as in goat-skins. He must have taken his idea from some Italian work: the remark is suitable only to a southern climate.

Barrow. In one so rainy as ours is, it would have been more judicious, I think, to have warned against building the house upon clay or marl, which are retentive of moisture, slippery nine months in the twelve, cracked the other three, of a color offensive to the sight, of a soil little accommodating to garden-plants, the water usually unwholesome, and the roads impassable.

Newton. On Negotiating I am sorry to find again our Lord Chancellor a dissembler and a tutor to lies:—

"To deal in person is good when a man's face breedeth regard, as commonly with inferiors; or in tender cases, where a man's eye upon the countenance of him with whom he speaketh may give him a direction how far to go; *and generally where a man will reserve to himself liberty, either to disavow or to expound.*"

Barrow. Bad enough: but surely he must appear to you any

thing rather than knave, when he recommends *the employment of froward and absurd men*, be the business what it may.

Newton. He recommends them for *business which doth not well bear out itself;* and in which, one would think, the wariest are the most wanted.

Barrow. But, like men who have just tripped, he walks the firmer and stouter instantly. The remainder of the Essay is worthy of his perspicacity.

Newton. In the next, *On Followers and Friends*, I find the word *espial* used by him a second time, for a minister the French call *espion*. It appears to me that it should denote, not the *person* but the *action*, as the same termination is used in *trial*.

Barrow. Right. We want some words in composition as we want some side-dishes at table, less for necessity than for decoration. On this principle, I should not quarrel with a writer who had used the verb *originate;* on condition however that he used it as a neuter: none but a sugar-slave would employ it actively. It may stand opposite to *terminate*.

Bacon in the preceding sentence used *glorious* for *vain-glorious;* a Latinism among the many of the age, and among the few of the author. Our language bears Gallicisms better than Latinisms; but whoever is resolved to write soberly must be contented with the number of each that was found among us in the time of the Reformation. Little is to be rejected of what was then in use, and less of any thing new is henceforward to be admitted. By which prudence and caution we may in time have writers as elegant as the Italian and the French, whom already we exceed, as this little volume proves, in vigor and invention.

Newton. He says, further on: "It is true that in government it is good to use men of one rank equally; for to countenance some extraordinarily is to make them insolent, and the rest discontent, because they may claim a due: but contrariwise in favor, to use men with much difference and election is good; for it maketh the persons preferred more thankful, and the rest more officious; because all is of favor."

Here again I am sorry so great an authority should, to use the words of my visitor, let his conscience run before his judgment, and his tongue slip in between. "In saying that all is of favor"

(thus carps my visitor) "he gives a preference to another form of government over the monarchal; another form indeed where all is not of favor; where something may be attributed to virtue, something to industry, something to genius; where something may accrue to us from the gratitude of our fellow-citizens; and not every thing drop and drivel from the frothy pulings of one swathed up in bandages never changed nor loosened; of one held always in the same arms, and with its face turned always in the same direction."

Barrow. Hold! hold! this is as bad as Bacon or Milton: nay, Cicero and Demosthenes, in the blindness of their hearts, could scarcely have spoken, to the nations they guided, with more contemptuous asperity of royal power.

Newton. I venerate it, as coming of God.

Barrow. Hold again! all things come from him: the hangman and the hanged are in the same predicament with the anointer and the anointed.

Newton. Sir, you remind me of an observation made in my father's house by the son of a republican, and who indeed was little better than one himself. My father had upbraided him on his irreverence to the Lord's anointed: he asked my father why he allowed his mind to be lime-twigged and ruffled and discomposed by words; and whether he would feel the same awe in repeating the syllables, *God's greased*, as in repeating the syllables, *God's anointed*. If the Esquimaux heard them, said he, they would think the man no better reared than themselves, and worse dressed, as dressed by one less in practice.

Barrow. No men are so facetious as those whose minds are somewhat perverted. Truth enjoys good air and clear light, but no play-ground. Keep your eyes upon Bacon: we may more safely look on him than on thrones. How wise is all the remainder of the Essay!

Newton. He says, *On Suitors*, and truly, that "Private suits do putrefy the public good." Soon afterward, "Some embrace suits *which* never mean to deal effectually in them." This seems ordinary and flat; but the words are requisite to a sentence founded (I fear) on a close observation of human nature, as courts render it. I noted them as presenting an incorrectness and indecision of language. *Who* is proper, not *which*; although

which was used indiscriminately, as we find in the beginning of the "Lord's Prayer:" but in that place there could be no confusion.

Barrow. Among the few crudities and barbarisms that yet oppressed our language in his learned age, Bacon has this, "A man *were better rise* in his suit." Indeed, he uses *were better* more than once; with the simple verb after it, and without *to*.

Newton. *On Studies* he cannot lose his road, having trodden it so frequently, and having left his mark upon so many objects all the way. Therefore it is no wonder that his genius points with a finger of fire to this subject.

He says, *On Faction*, that, "Many a man's strength is in opposition, and when that faileth he groweth out of use." He must have written from inspiration; for in his age I find no person to whom he can have alluded.

Barrow. Perhaps not; yet the preceding may have furnished him with examples.

Newton. In the first sentence *On Ceremonies and Respects* are the words, "He that is only real had need have exceeding great parts of virtue." This weighty and sorrowful truth does not prevent me from questioning the expression, *had need have*.

Barrow. The true words, which all authors write amiss, are, *ha'* need *of*. *Ha' need* sounds like *had need*, and *have* sounds like *of*, in speaking quickly. Hence the wisest men have written the words improperly, by writing at once from the ear without an appeal or reference to grammar.

Newton. *On Praise* he says ingeniously, but not altogether truly, "Fame is like a river, that beareth up things light and swollen, and drowns things weighty and solid."

Barrow. This is true only of literary fame; and the drowned things are brought to light again, sometimes by the warmer season and sometimes by the stormier.

He uses *suspect* for *suspicion:* we retain *aspect*, *respect*, *retrospect*, *prospect*. I know not whether the chancellor's award in favor of *suspect* will be repealed or acquiesced in.

Newton. In the next Essay, *On Vain-glory*, he says: "In fame of learning the flight will be slow without some feathers of ostentation." That is hard, if true.

Barrow. There must be a good deal of movement and shuffling before there is any rising from the ground; and those who have the longest wings have the most difficulty in the first mounting. In literature, as at foot-ball, strength and agility are insufficient of themselves: you must have your *side*, or you may run till you are out of breath, and kick till you are out of shoes, and never win the game. There must be some to keep others off you, and some to prolong for you the ball's rebound. But your figures, dear Isaac, will serve as tenterhooks to catch the fingers of those who would meddle with your letters. Do not however be ambitious of an early fame: such is apt to shrivel and to drop under the tree.

Newton. The author continues the same subject in the next Essay, though under a different title. *Of Honor and Reputation* he says, "Discreet followers and servants help much to reputation." Then he who has no servant, or an indiscreet one, must be content to be helped to little of it.

Barrow.[15] Seeing that reputation is casual, that the wise may long want it, that the unwise may soon acquire it, that a servant may further it, that a spiteful man may obstruct it, that a passionate man may maim it, and that whole gangs are ready to waylay it as it mounts the hill,—I would not wish greatly to carry it about me, but rather to place it in some safe spot, where few could find, and not many will look after it. But those who discover it will try in their hands its weight and quality, and take especial care lest they injure it, saying, "It is his and his only; leave it to him, and wish him increase in it."

Newton. Where Bacon is occupied, "in the true marshalling of sovran honor," he gives the third place to *liberatores* or *salvatores*. He wishes to speak in Latin; one of these words belongs not to the language.

Barrow. His Latin is always void of elegance and grace; but he had the generosity to write in it, that he might be useful the more extensively. We English are far below the Italians, French, Germans, and Dutch in our Latinity; yet we have Latin volumes written by our countrymen, each of which, in its matter, is fairly worth half theirs. They, like certain fine gentlemen, seem to found their ideas of elegance on slenderness, and in

[15 *Barrow* and the following *Newton* added in 2nd ed.]

twenty or thirty of them we hardly find a thought or remark at all worthy of preservation. I remember but one sentence; which however, if Cicero had written it, would be recorded among the best he ever wrote. "Valuit nimirum maledicentiâ, gratâ, cunctis, etiam iis qui neque sibi maledici neque maledicere ipsi aliis velint."

Newton.[16] Permit me to inquire, sir, by whom was this strong and shrewd and truly Sallustian sentence written?

Barrow. By Vavassor, a Jesuit.

It may he remarked, and perhaps you have done it, that the title itself of this Essay, *The True Marshalling of sovran Honor*, is incorrect. By *marshalling* he means *the giving of rates or degrees;* now what is *sovran* has no rates or degrees: he should have said "of titles assumed by sovran princes."

Newton. In the first sentence *On Judicature*, he uses the singular and plural in designating the same body: either is admissible, but not both:—

"Else will it be like the authority claimed by the Church of Rome, which, under pretext of exposition of Scripture, *doth* not stick to add and alter, and to pronounce that which *they* do not find, and, by show of antiquity, to introduce novelty."

What gravity and wisdom is there in the remark that, "One foul sentence doth more hurt than many foul examples: for these do but corrupt the stream, the other corrupteth the fountain."

The worst, and almost the only bad, sentence in the volume is the childish antithesis, "There be, saith the Scripture, that turn judgment into wormwood, and surely there be also that turn it into vinegar: for injustice maketh it bitter, and delays make it sour."

On the Vicissitudes of Things he observes that "the true religion is built upon the rock, the rest are tossed upon the waves of time." My[17] visitor said hereupon: "I doubt whether this magnificent figure hath truth for its basis. If by true religion is meant the religion of our Saviour, as practised by his apostles,

[16 From "*Newton*" to "Jesuit" (3 lines) added in 2nd ed. The words below, "The true marshalling of sovran honor," are not the title of an Essay, but occur in the text of the Essay "On Honors and Dignities."]

[17 From "My" to "hereupon" added in 2nd ed.]

they outlived it. They complain that it never took firm possession even of their own auditors. Saint Peter himself was reproved by his master for using his sword too vigorously, after all he had said against any use of it whatever; yet, so little good did the reproof, he fell immediately to betraying the very man he had thus defended. But if by true religion we mean the Church of Rome, we come nearer the fact; for that religion, with patchings and repairings, with materials purloined from others, with piles driven under the foundation, and buttresses without that darken every thing within, surmounted by pinnacles raised above the upper story, hath lasted long, and will remain while men are persuaded that wax and stockfish can atone for their vices. The obstacle to our acceptance of the meaning is that it hath been convicted of many impostures in its claims and miracles, that it continues to insist on them, and that it uses violence (which is forbidden by Christ) against those who stumble or doubt."

Barrow. Deafness is not to be healed by breaking the head, nor blindness by pulling the eyes out: it is time the doctors should try new experiments; if they will not, it is time that the patients should try new doctors.

Newton. A bad religion may be kept afoot by the same means as other kinds of bad government; by corruption and terror, by spies and torturers. No doubt it will please God to see all things set to rights; but we must acknowledge that the best religion, like the best men, has fared the worst.

Bacon says he "reckons martyrdoms among miracles, because they *seem* to exceed the strength of human nature." If they did *seem* to exceed the strength of human nature, this is no sufficient reason why they should be ranked with miracles; for martyrdoms have appertained to many religions, if we may call voluntary death to prove a misbeliever's sincerity a martyrdom, while we know that miracles belong exclusively to the Christian: and even in this faith there are degrees of latitude and longitude which they were never known to pass, although, humanly speaking, they were much wanted. The Lithuanians, and other north-eastern nations, were long before they were reclaimed from paganism, for want of miracles. God's good time had not come: and he fell upon different expedients for their conversion.

On the Vicissitudes of Things we find mention of Plato's great

year. I think you once told me, Plato took more from others than he knew what to do with.

Barrow. Instead of simplifying, he involves and confounds.

Newton. I hope hereafter to study the heavenly bodies with greater accuracy and on other principles than philosophers have done hitherto. The reasons of Bacon why "the northern tract of the world . . . is the more martial region" are unworthy of his perspicacity. First, he assigns the stars of the hemisphere; then, the greatness of the continent, "whereas the south part is almost all sea;" then, the cold of the northern parts, "which is that which, without aid of discipline, doth make the bodies hardest and the courage warmest." The stars can have no effect whatever on the courage or virtues of men, unless we call the sun one of them, as the poets do. The heat of the sun may produce effeminacy and sloth in many constitutions, and contrary effects in many; but I suspect that dryness and moisture are more efficient on the human body than heat and cold. Some races, as in dogs and horses and cattle of every kind, are better than others, and do not lose their qualities for many ages, nor, unless others cross them, without the confluence of many causes. There may be as much courage in hot climates as in cold. The inhabitants of Madagascar and Malacca are braver than the Laplanders, and perhaps not less brave than the Londoners. The fact is this: people in warm climates are in the full enjoyment of all the pleasures that animal life affords, and are disinclined to toil after that which no toil could produce or increase; while the native of the north is condemned by climate to a life of labor, which oftentimes can procure for him but a scanty portion of what his vehement and exasperated appetite demands. Therefore he cuts it short with his sword, and reaps the field sown by the southern.

Bacon seems to me just in his opinion, if not that *ordnance*, at least that inflammable powder and annoyance by its means, perhaps in rockets, was known among the ancients. He instances the Oxydraces in India. The remark is, I imagine, equally applicable to the priests of Delphi, who repelled the Gauls with it from the temple of Apollo. This [18] is the more remarkable, as the Persians too encountered the same resistance, and experienced

[18] From "This" to "exploded" (5 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

the double force of *thunderbolts and earthquake.* Whence we may surmise that not only missiles, propelled by the combustion of powder, were aimed against them, but likewise that mines exploded. And perhaps other priests, the only people in most places who formerly had leisure for experiments, were equally acquainted with it, and used it for their own defence only, and only in cases of extremity. Etruscan [19] soothsayers were appointed to blast the army of Alaric with lightning, and the Pope acceded to the proposal; but his Holiness, on reflection, was of opinion that *aurum fulminans* was more effectual.

I wish the Essay *On Fame* had been completed: and even then its chief effect on me, perhaps, would be to excite another wish; as gratification usually does. It would have made me sigh for the recovery of Cicero *On Glory*, that the two greatest of philosophers might be compared on the same ground.

Barrow. Let us look up at Fame without a desire or a repining; and let us pardon all her falsehoods and delays, in remembrance that the best verse in Homer, and the best in Virgil, are on her. Virgil's is indeed but a feather from the wing of Homer.

Newton. You show a very forgiving mind, sir, and I hope she will be grateful to you. I do not know what these lines are worth, as they give me no equations.

Barrow. Nothing should be considered quite independently of every thing else. We owe reverence to all great writers; but our reverence to one would be injustice to another, unless we collated and compared their merits.

Newton. Some are so dissimilar to others, that I know not how it can be done.

Barrow. Liquids and solids are dissimilar, yet may be weighed in the same scales. All things are composed of portions; and all things bear proportions relatively,—mind to mind, matter to matter. Archimedes and Homer are susceptible of comparison; but the process would be long and tedious, the principles must be sought from afar, nor is the man perhaps at the next door who must be called for the operation. Bacon and Milton, Bacon and Shakspeare, may be compared with little difficulty, wide asunder as they appear to stand. How-

[19 From "Etruscan" to "effectual" (4 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

ever, since the cogitative and imaginative parts of mind are exercised by both in broad daylight and in open spaces, the degrees in which they are exercised are within our calculation. Until we bring together the weightiest works of genius from the remotest distances, we shall display no admirable power of criticism. None such hath been hitherto exhibited in the world, which stands in relation to criticism as it stood in relation to metaphysics, until the time of Aristoteles. He left them imperfect; and they have lain little better ever since. The good sense of Cicero led him to clearer studies and wholesomer exercise; and where he could not pluck fruit he would not pluck brambles. In Plato we find only arbors and grottos, with moss and shell-work all misplaced. Aristoteles hath built a solider edifice, but hath built it across our road: we must throw it down again, and use what we can of the materials elsewhere.

Newton. Bacon, seen only in his *Essays*, would have appeared to me (fresh as I come from the study of the ancients, and captivated as I confess I am by the graces of their language) the wisest and most instructive of writers.

Barrow. In calling him the wisest of writers, you must except those who wrote from inspiration.

Newton. Ha! that is quite another thing.

Barrow. Henceforward I would advise you to follow the bent of your genius, in examining those matters principally which are susceptible of demonstration. Every young man should have some proposed end for his studies: let yours be philosophy; and principally those parts of it in which the ancients have done little and the moderns less. And never be dejected, my dear Isaac, though it should enable you to throw but a scarcity of light on the *Revelation*, *The Rape of Helen*, and *The Golden Fleece*.

Newton. I hope by my labors I may find a clew to them in the process of time. But perhaps my conjectures may turn out wrong, as those on the book before me have.

Barrow. How?

Newton. I should always have imagined, if you had not taught me the contrary, that there is more of genius and philosophy in Bacon's *Essays* than in all Cicero's works, however

less there be of the scholastic and oratorical. Perhaps I, by being no estimator of style——

Barrow. Peace, peace! my modest Newton! Perhaps I, by being too much an estimator of it, have overvalued the clearest head and the purest tongue of antiquity. My [20] Lord Justice Coke, and probably the more learned Selden, would have ridiculed or reproved us, had we dared entertain in their presence a doubt of Cicero's superiority over Bacon. No very great man ever reached the standard of his greatness in the crowd of his contemporaries. This hath always been reserved for the secondary. There must either be something of the vulgar, something in which the commonalty can recognise their own features, or there must be a laxity, a jealousy, an excitement stimulating a false appetite. Your brief review of the *Essays* hath brought back to my recollection so much of shrewd judgment, so much of rich imagery, such a profusion of truths so plain, as (without his manner of exhibiting them) to appear almost unimportant that, in the various high qualities of the human mind, I must acknowledge not only Cicero, but every prose-writer among the Greeks, to stand far below him. Cicero is least valued for his highest merits, his fulness and his perspicuity. Bad judges (and how few are not so!) desire in composition the concise and the obscure, not knowing that the one most frequently arises from paucity of materials, and the other from inability to manage and dispose them. Have you never observed that, among the ignorant in painting, dark pictures are usually called the finest in the collection, and grey-bearded heads, fit only for the garret, are preferred to the radiance of light and beauty? Have you yourself never thought, before you could well measure and calculate, that books and furniture thrown about a room appeared to be in much greater quantities than when they were arranged? At every step we take to gain the approbation of the wise, we lose something in the estimation of the vulgar. Look within: cannot we afford it?

The minds of few can take in the whole of a great author, and fewer can draw him close enough to another for just commensuration. A fine passage may strike us less forcibly than one beneath it in beauty, from less sensibility in us at the moment; whence less enthusiasm, less quickness of perception, less capacity,

[20] From "My" to "him" (16 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

less hold. You have omitted to remark some of the noblest things in Bacon, often I believe because there is no power of judgment to be shown in the expression of admiration, and perhaps too sometimes from the repetition and intensity of delight.

Newton. Sir, I forebore to lift up my hands as a mark of admiration. You ordered me to demonstrate, if I could, the defects of this wonderful man, unnoticed hitherto.

Barrow. You have done it to my satisfaction. Cicero disdained not in the latter days of his life, when he was highest in reputation and dignity, to perform a similar office in regard to Epicurus: and I wish he had exhibited the same accuracy and attention, the same moderation and respect. The objections of your friend and visitor are not altogether frivolous: take care however lest he, by his disceptations, move you from your faith. If you hold the faith, the faith will support you; as, if you make your bed warm by lying in it, your bed will keep you so: never mind what the ticking or the wadding may be made of. There are few things against which I see need to warn you, and not many on which you want advice. You are not profuse in your expenditure; yet as you, like most of the studious, are inattentive to money-affairs, let me guard you against evils following on this negligence, worse than the negligence itself. Whenever a young man is remarked for it, a higher price is fixed on what he purchases; and dishonest men of every description push themselves into his service, and often acquire his confidence, not only to the injury of his fortune, but likewise of his credit and respectability. Let a gentleman be known to have been cheated of twenty pounds, and it costs him forty a-year for the remainder of his life. Therefore, if you detect the cheat, the wisest thing is to conceal it; both for fear of the rogues about your sideboard, and of those more dexterous ones round the green cloth, under the judge, in your county assize-room.

You will become an author ere long; and every author must attend to the means of conveying his information. The plainness of your style is suitable to your manners and your studies. Avoid, which many grave men have not done, words taken from sacred subjects and from elevated poetry: these we have seen vilely prostituted. Avoid too the society of the barbarians who misemploy them: they are vain, irreverent, and irreclaimable to right feelings.

The dialogues of Galileo, which you have been studying, are written with much propriety and precision. I do not urge you to write in dialogue, although the best writers of every age have done it; the best parts of Homer and Milton are speeches and replies; the best parts of every great historian are the same: the wisest men of Athens and of Rome converse together in this manner, as they are shown to us by Xenophon, by Plato, and by Cicero. Whether you adopt such a form of composition,—which, if your opinions are new, will protect you in part from the hostility all novelty (unless it is vicious) excites,—or whether you choose to go along the unbroken surface of the didactic, never look abroad for any kind of ornament. Apollo, either as the god of day or the slayer of Python, had nothing about him to obscure his clearness or to impede his strength. To one of your mild manners, it would be superfluous to recommend equanimity in competition, and calmness in controversy. How easy is it for the plainest things to be misinterpreted by men not unwise, which a calm disquisition sets right!—and how fortunate and opportune is it to find in ourselves that calmness which almost the wisest have wanted, on urgent and grave occasions! If others for a time are preferred to you, let your heart lie sacredly still; and you will hear from it the true and plain oracle, that not for ever will the magistracy of letters allow the rancid transparencies of coarse colormen to stand before your propylæa. It is time that Philosophy should have her share in our literature; that the combinations and appearances of matter be scientifically considered and luminously displayed. Frigid conceits on theological questions, heaps of snow on barren crags, compose at present the greater part of our domain: volcanoes of politics burst forth from time to time, and vary, without enlivening, the scene.

Do not fear to be less rich in the productions of your mind at one season than at another. Marshes are always marshes, and pools are pools; but the sea, in those places where we admire it most, is sometimes sea and sometimes dry land; sometimes it brings ships into port, and sometimes it leaves them where they can be refitted and equipped. The capacious mind neither rises nor sinks, neither labors nor rests, in vain. Even in those intervals when it loses the consciousness of its powers, when it swims as it were in vacuity, and feels not what is external nor internal, it acquires or

recovers strength, as the body does by sleep. Never try to say things admirably ;[21] try only to say them plainly ; for your business is with the considerate philosopher, and not with the polemical assembly. If a thing can be demonstrated two ways, demonstrate it in both : one will please this man best, the other that ; and pleasure, if obvious and unsought, is never to be neglected by those appointed from above to lead us into knowledge. Many will readily mount stiles and gates to walk along a footpath in a field, whom the very sight of a bare public road would disincline and weary ; and yet the place whereto they travel lies at the end of each. Your studies are of a nature unsusceptible of much decoration : otherwise it would be my duty and my care to warn you against it, not merely as idle and unnecessary, but as obstructing your intent. The fond of wine are little fond of the sweet or of the new : the fond of learning are no fonder of its must than of its dregs. Something of the severe hath always been appertaining to order and to grace ; and the beauty that is not too liberal is sought the most ardently and loved the longest. The Graces have their zones, and Venus her cestus. In the writings of the philosopher are the frivolities of ornament the most ill-placed ; in you would they be particularly, who, promising to lay open before us an infinity of worlds, should turn aside to display the petals of a double pink.

It is dangerous to have any intercourse or dealing with small authors. They are as troublesome to handle, as easy to discompose, as difficult to pacify, and leave as unpleasant marks on you, as small children. Cultivate on the other hand the society and friendship of the higher ; first, that you may learn to reverence them, which of itself is both a pleasure and a virtue ; and then, that on proper occasions you may defend them against the malevolent, which is a duty. And this duty cannot be well and satisfactorily performed with an imperfect knowledge, or with an inadequate esteem. Habits of respect to our superiors are among the best we can attain, if we only remove from our bosom the importunate desire of unworthy advantages from them. They belong to the higher department of justice, and will procure for us in due time our portion of it. Beside, O Isaac! in this affair our humanity is deeply con-

[21 For "admirably" 1st ed. reads "well" ; for "plainly" 1st ed. reads "clearly."]

cerned. Think how gratifying, how consolatory, how all-sufficient, are the regards and attentions of such wise and worthy men as you to those whom inferior but more powerful ones, some in scarlet, some in purple, some (it may be) in ermine, vilify or neglect! Many are there to whom we are now indifferent, or nearly, whom, if we had approached them as we ought to have done, we should have cherished, loved, and honored. Let not this reflection, which on rude and unequal minds may fall without form and features and pass away like the idlest cloud-shadow, be lost on you. Old literary men, beside age and experience, have another quality in common with Nestor: they, in the literature of the country, are praisers of times past, partly from moroseness, and partly from custom and conviction. The illiterate, on the contrary, raise higher than the steeples, and dress up in the gaudiest trim, a maypole of their own, and dance round it while any rag flutters. So tenacious are Englishmen of their opinions, that they would rather lose their franchises and almost their lives. And this tenacity hath not its hold upon letters only, but likewise upon whatever is public. I have witnessed it in men guilty of ingratitude, of fraud, of peculation, of prevarication, of treachery to friends, of insolence to patrons, of misleading of colleagues, of abandonment of party, of renunciation of principles, of arrogance to honester men and wiser, of humiliation to strumpets for the obtainment of place and profit, of every villany in short which unfits not only for the honors of public, but rejects from the confidence of private, life. And there have been people so maddened by faction, that they would almost have erected a monument to such persons, hoping to spite and irritate their adversaries, and unconscious or heedless that the inscription must be their own condemnation. Those who have acted in this manner will repent of it; but they will hate you for ever if you foretell them of their repentance. It is not the fact nor the consequence, it is the motive, that turns and pinches them; and they would think it straightforward and natural to cry out against you, and a violence and a malady to cry out against themselves. The praises they have given they will maintain, and more firmly than if they were due; as perjurers stick to perjury more hotly than the veracious to truth. Supposing there should be any day of your life unoccupied by study, there will not be one without

an argument why parties, literary or political, should be avoided. You are too great to be gregarious; and were you to attempt it, the gregarious in a mass would turn their heads against you. The greater who enter into public life are disposed at last to quit it: *retirement with dignity* is their device; the meaning of which is, retirement with as much of the public property as can be amassed and carried away. This race of great people is very numerous. I want before I die to see one or two ready to believe, and to act on the belief, that there is as much dignity in retiring soon as late, with little as with loads, with quiet minds and consciences as with ulcerated or discomposed. I have already seen some hundred sectaries of that pugnacious pope, who, being reminded that Christ commanded Peter to put up his sword, replied, "Yes, when he had cut the ear off."

To be in right harmony, the soul not only must be never out of time, but must never lose sight of the theme its Creator's hand hath noted.

Why are you peeping over your forefinger into those pages near the beginning of the volume?

Newton. I have omitted the notice of several Essays.

Barrow. There are many that require no observation for peculiarities; though perhaps there is not one that any other man could have written.

Newton. I had something more, sir, to say—or rather—I had something more, sir, to ask—about Friendship.

Barrow. All men, but the studious above all, must beware in the formation of it. Advice or caution on this subject comes immaturely and ungracefully from the young, exhibiting a proof either of temerity or suspicion; but when you hear it from a man of my age, who has been singularly fortunate in the past, and foresees the same felicity in those springing up before him, you may accept it as the direction of a calm observer, telling you all he has remarked on the greater part of a road which he has nearly gone through, and which you have but just entered. Never take into your confidence, or admit often into your company, any man who does not know, on some important subject, more than you do. Be his rank, be his virtues, what they may, he will be a hindrance to your pursuits, and an obstruction to your greatness. If indeed the greatness were such as courts can bestow, and such

as can be laid on the shoulders of a groom and make him look like the rest of the company, my advice would be misplaced; but since all transcendent, all true and genuine greatness must be of a man's own raising, and only on the foundation that the hand of God has laid, do not let any touch it: keep them off civilly, but keep them off. Affect no stoicism; display no indifference: let their coin pass current; but do not you exchange for it the purer ore you carry, nor think the milling pays for the alloy. Greatly favored and blessed by Providence will you be, if you should in your lifetime be known for what you are: the contrary, if you should be transformed.

Newton. Better and more decorous would it be perhaps, if I filled up your pause with my reflections: but you always have permitted me to ask you questions; and now, unless my gratitude misleads me, you invite it.

Barrow. Ask me any thing: I will answer it, if I can; and I will pardon you, as I have often done, if you puzzle me.

Newton. Is it not a difficult and a painful thing to repulse, or to receive ungraciously, the advances of friendship?

Barrow. It withers the heart, if indeed his heart were ever sound who doth it. Love, serve, run into danger, venture life, for him who would cherish you: give him every thing but your time and your glory. Morning recreations, convivial meals, evening walks, thoughts, questions, wishes, wants, partake with him. Yes, Isaac! there are men born for friendship; men to whom the cultivation of it is nature, is necessity, as the making of honey is to bees. Do not let them suffer for the sweets they would gather; but do not think to live upon those sweets. Our corrupted state requires robuster food, or must grow more and more unsound.

Newton. I would yet say something; a few words; on this subject—or one next to it.

Barrow. *On Expense* then: that is the next. I have given you some warning about it, and hardly know what else to say. Cannot you find the place?

Newton. I had it under my hand. If—that is, provided—your time, sir!—

Barrow. Speak it out, man! Are you in a ship of Marcellus under the mirror of Archimedes, that you fume and redden so?

Cry to him that you are his scholar, and went out only to parley.

Newton. Sir! in a word—ought a studious man to think of matrimony?

Barrow. Painters, poets, mathematicians, never ought: other studious men, after reflecting for twenty years upon it, may. Had I a son of your age, I would not leave him in a grazing country. Many a man hath been safe among cornfields, who falls a victim on the grass under an elm. There are lightnings very fatal in such places.

Newton. Supposing me no mathematician, I must reflect then for twenty years!

Barrow. Begin to reflect on it after the twenty; and continue to reflect on it all the remainder: I mean at intervals, and quite leisurely. It will save to you many prayers, and may suggest to you one thanksgiving.

XVI. WALTON, COTTON, AND OLDWAYS.[1]

Walton. God be with thee and preserve thee, old Ashbourne! Thou art verily the pleasantest place upon his earth; I mean from May-day till Michaelmas. Son Cotton, let us tarry a little here upon the bridge. Did you ever see greener meadows than these on either hand? And what says that fine lofty spire upon the left, a trowling-line's cast from us? It says methinks, "Blessed be the Lord for this bounty: come hither and repeat it beside me." How my jade winces! I wish the strawberry-spotted trout, and ash-colored grayling under us, had the bree that plagues thee so, my merry wench! Look, my son, at the great venerable house opposite. You know these parts as well as

[1 The character of Mr Oldways in this Conversation is imaginary, or rather his association with Walton and Cotton is. See note on p. 165. The poems attributed to Donne are, of course, from Landor's own pen, and Margaret Hayes is equally a creature of fancy. The facts of Donne's life are taken from Walton's life. The reader of Charles Cotton's poems may find it hard to believe that he was as ingenuous a youth as Landor paints him. (Imag. Convers., v., 1829. Works, i., 1846. Works, iv. 1876.)]

I do, or better; are you acquainted with the worthy who lives over there?

Cotton. I cannot say I am.[2]

Walton. You shall be then. He has resided here forty-five years, and knew intimately our good Doctor Donne, and (I hear) hath some of his verses, written when he was a stripling or little better, the which we come after.

Cotton. That, I imagine, must be he!—the man in black, walking above the house.

Walton. Truly said on both counts. Willy Oldways, sure enough; and he doth walk above his house-top. The gardens here, you observe, overhang the streets.

Cotton. Ashbourne, to my mind, is the prettiest town in England.

Walton. And there is nowhere between Trent and Tweed a sweeter stream for the trout, I do assure you, than the one our horses are bestriding. Those, in my opinion, were very wise men who consecrated certain streams to the Muses: I know not whether I can say so much of those who added the mountains. Whenever I am beside a river or rivulet on a sunny day, and think a little while, and let images warm into life about me, and joyous sounds increase and multiply in their innocence, the sun looks brighter and feels warmer, and I am readier to live, and less unready to die.

> Son Cotton! these light idle brooks,
> Peeping into so many nooks,
> Yet have not for their idlest wave
> The leisure you may think they have:
> No, not the little ones that run
> And hide behind the first big stone,
> When they have squirted in the eye
> Of their next neighbor passing by;
> Nor yonder curly sideling fellow
> Of tones than Pan's own flute more mellow,
> Who learns his tune and tries it over
> As girl who fain would please her lover
> Something has each of them to say;
> He says it and then runs away,
> And says it in another place,
> Continuing the unthrifty chase.

[2 First ed. reads: "am tho' he visits my relatives when he rides so far."]

We have as many tales to tell,
And look as gay and run as well,
But leave another to pursue
What we had promised we would do;
Till in the order God has fated,
One after one precipitated,
Whether we *would* on, or would *not* on,
Just like these idle waves, son Cotton!

And now I have taken you by surprise, I will have (finished or unfinished) the verses you snatched out of my hand, and promised me another time, when you awoke this morning.

Cotton. If[3] you must have them, here they are.

Walton (*reads*).

Rocks under Okeover park-paling
Better than Ashbourne suit the grayling.
Reckless of people springs the trout,
Tossing his vacant head about,
And his distinction-stars, as one
Not to be touched but looked upon,
And smirks askance, as who should say
"I'd lay now (if I e'er *did* lay)
The brightest fly that shines above,
You know not what *I'm* thinking of;
What *you* are, I can plainly tell
And so, my gentles, fare ye well!"

Heigh! heigh! what have we here?—a[4] double hook with a bait upon each side. Faith! son Cotton, if my friend Oldways had seen these,—not the verses I have been reading, but these others I have run over in silence,—he would have reproved me, in his mild amicable way, for my friendship with one who, at two-and-twenty, could either know so much or invent so much about a girl. He remarked to me, the last time we met, that our climate was more backward and our youth more forward than anciently; and, taking out a newspaper from under the cushion of his arm-chair, showed me a paragraph, with a cross in red ink, and seven or eight marks of admiration,—some on one side, some on the other,—in which there was mention made of a female servant,

[3] From "If" to "(*reads*)" (2 lines) added in 2nd ed.]
[4] From "a" to "side" added in 2nd ed. One line below, from "not" to "silence" (2 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

who, hardly seventeen years old, charged her master's son, who was barely two older—

Cotton. Nonsense! nonsense! impossible!

Walton. Why, he himself seemed to express a doubt; for beneath was written, "Qu., if perjured—which God forbid! May all turn out to his glory!"

Cotton. But really I do not recollect that paper of mine, if mine it be, which[5] appears to have stuck against the Okeover paling lines.

Walton. Look! they are both on the same scrap. Truly, son, there are girls here and there who might have said as much as thou, their proctor, hast indicted for them: they have such froward tongues in their heads, some of them. A breath keeps them in motion, like a Jew's harp, God knows how long. If you do not or will not recollect the verses on this endorsement, I will read them again, and aloud.

Cotton. Pray do not balk your fancy.

Walton (*reads*).

> Where[6] 's my apron? I will gather
> Daffodils and kingcups, rather
> Than have fifty silly souls,
> False as cats and dull as owls,
> Looking up into my eyes
> And half-blinding me with sighs.

Cats, forsooth! *Owls*, and cry you mercy! Have[7] they no better words than those for civil people? Did any young woman really use the expressions, bating the metre, or can you have contrived them out of pure likelihood?

Cotton. I will not gratify your curiosity at present.

[5 From "which" to "lines" and "look" to "scrap" added in 2nd ed. Two lines below, from "as thou" to "them" added in 2nd ed. One line below, from "God" to "(*reads*)" (5 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

[6 First ed. reads:

> "In my bosom I would rather
> Daffodils and kingcups gather,
> Than have fifty sighing souls
> False as cats and dull as owls."

Last couplet added in 2nd ed.]

[7 From "Have" to "then" (5 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

Walton. Anon, then.

Here I stretch myself along,
Tell a tale or sing a song,
By my cousin Sue or Bet—
And, for dinner here I get
Strawberries, curds, or what I please,
With my bread upon my knees;
And, when I have had enough,
Shake, and off to *blind-man's-buff*.[8]

Spoken in the character of a maiden, it seems, who little knows, in her innocence, that *blind-man's-buff* is a perilous game.

[[8] First ed. adds the following four lines:

"Which I cannot do if they
Ever come across my way,
They so puzzle me! . . that tongue
Always makes one cry out wrong!"

A note is appended to these verses in the 1st ed. whose application it is somewhat hard to discover.

"I cannot but think that I am indebted to a beautiful little poem of Redi, for the train of these ideas, though without a consciousness of it while I was writing. His sonnets are among the worst in the language: there is but one exception. I am likely to be a bad translator; and moreover I must inform the reader that I am designedly an unfaithful one in the second line, of which the literal and entire version is "who pas thro' *Pity-street*." I have taken the elegiac measure as more becoming the subject.

"Ye gentle souls, ye tenderer of the fair
Who, passing by, to Pity's voice incline,
O, stay a while and hear me! then declare
If there was ever grief that equal'd mine.

"There was a woman to whose hallowed breast
Faith had retired, and Honour fixed his throne—
Pride, tho' upheld by Virtue, she repressed,
Ye gentle souls, *that* woman was my own.

"Her form was fill'd with beauty, from her face;
Grace was in all she did, in all she said,
Grace in her pleasures, in her sorrows grace—
Ye gentle souls, *that* gentle soul is fled!"

From "spoken" to "church" (4 lines) added in 2nd ed. First ed reads: "In the church, to our right, lie the Cockaynes. Whole," &c.]

You are looking, I perceive, from off the streamlet toward the church. In its chancel lie the first and last of the Cockaynes. Whole races of men have been exterminated by war and pestilence; families and names have slipped down and lost themselves by slow and imperceptible decay: but I doubt whether any breed of fish, with heron and otter and angler in pursuit of it, hath been extinguished since the Heptarchy. They might humble our pride a whit, methinks, though they hold their tongues. The people here entertain a strange prejudice against the *nine-eyes*.

Cotton. What, in the name of wonder, is that?

Walton. At your years, do not you know? It is a tiny kind of lamprey, a finger long; it sticketh to the stones by its sucker, and, if you are not warier and more knowing than folks in general from the South, you might take it for a weed: it wriggles its whole body to and fro so regularly, and is of that dark color which subaqueous weeds are often of, as though they were wet through; which they are not any more than land-weeds, if one may believe young Doctor Plott, who told me so in confidence.

Hold my mare, son Cotton. I will try whether my whip can reach the window, when I have mounted the bank.

Cotton. Curious! the middle of a street to be lower than the side by several feet. People would not believe it in London or Hull.

Walton. Ho! lass! tell the good parson, your master, or his wife if she be nearer at hand, that two friends would dine with him: Charles Cotton, kinsman of Mistress Cotton of the Peak, and his humble servant, Izaak Walton.

Girl. If you are come, gentles, to dine with my master, I will make another kidney-pudding first, while I am about it, and then tell him; not but we have enough and to spare, yet master and mistress love to see plenty, and to welcome with no such peacods as words.

Walton. Go, thou hearty jade; trip it, and tell him.

Cotton. I will answer for it, thy friend is a good soul:[9] I perceive it in the heartiness and alacrity of the wench. She glories in his hospitality, and it renders her labor a delight.

[9 First ed. reads: "soul, although I know but little of him and have not met him for years. *Walton.* He wants," &c.]

Walton. He wants nothing, yet he keeps the grammar-school, and is ready to receive, as private tutor, any young gentleman in preparation for Oxford or Cambridge; but only one. They live like princes, converse like friends, and part like lovers.*

Cotton. Here he comes: I never saw such a profusion of snow-white hair.

Walton. Let us go up and meet him.

Oldways. Welcome, my friends! will you walk back into the house, or sit awhile in the shade here?

Walton. We will sit down in the grass, on each side of your arm-chair, good master William. Why, how is this? here are tulips and other flowers by the thousand growing out of the turf. You are all of a piece, my sunny saint: you are always concealing the best things about you, except your counsel, your raisin-wine, and your money.

Oldways. The garden was once divided by borders. A young gentleman, my private pupil, was fond of leaping: his heels ruined my choicest flowers, ten or twenty at a time. I remonstrated: he patted me on the shoulder, and said, "My dear Mr Oldways, in these borders if you miss a flower you are uneasy; now, if the whole garden were in turf, you would be delighted to discover one. Turf it then, and leave the flowers to grow or not to grow, as may happen." I mentioned it to my wife: "Suppose we do," said she. It was done; and the boy's remark, I have found by experience, is true.

Walton. You have some very nice flies about the trees here, friend Oldways. Charles, do prythee lay thy hand upon that green one. He has it! he has it! bravely done, upon my life! I never saw any thing achieved so admirably—not a wing nor an antenna the worse for it. Put him into this box. Thou art caught, but shalt catch others: lie softly.

* I pay this tribute to my worthy old tutor, Mr Langley of Ashbourne, under whose tuition I passed a year between Rugby and Oxford. He would take only one private pupil, and never had but me. The kindness of him and his wife to me was parental. They died nearly together, about five-and-twenty years ago. Never was a youth blest with three such indulgent and affectionate private tutors as I was: before, by the elegant and generous Doctor John Sleath, at Rugby; and, after, by the saintly Benwell, at Oxford.—W. S. L.

Cotton. The transport of Dad Walton will carry him off (I would lay a wager) from the object of his ride.

Oldways. What was that, sir?

Cotton. Old Donne, I suspect, is nothing to such a fly.

Walton. All things in their season.

Cotton. Come, I carried the rods in my hand all the way.

Oldways. I never could have believed, Master Izaak, that you would have trusted your tackle out of your own hand.

Walton. Without cogent reason, no, indeed: but—let me whisper.

I told youngster it was because I carried a hunting-whip, and could not hold that and rod too. But why did I carry it, bethink you?

Oldways. I cannot guess.

Walton. I must come behind your chair and whisper softlier. I have that in my pocket which might make the dogs inquisitive and troublesome,—a rare paste, of my own invention. When son Cotton sees me draw up gill after gill, and he can do nothing, he will respect me,—not that I have to complain of him as yet, —and he shall know the whole at supper, after [10] the first day's sport.

Cotton. Have you asked?

Walton. Anon: have patience.

Cotton. Will no reminding do? Not a rod or line, or fly of any color, false or true, shall you have, Dad Izaak, before you have made to our kind host here your intended application.

Oldways. No ceremony with me, I desire. Speak, and have.

Walton. Oldways, I think you were curate to Master Donne?

Oldways. When I was first in holy orders, and [11] he was ready for another world.

Walton. I have heard it reported that you have some of his earlier poetry.

Oldways. I have (I believe) a trifle or two; but, if he were living, he would not wish them to see the light.

[10] From "after" to "sport" added in 2nd ed.]
[11] From "and" to "world" added in 2nd ed.]

Walton. Why not?—he had nothing to fear: his fame was established; and he was a discreet and holy man.

Oldways. He was almost in his boyhood when he wrote it, being but in his twenty-third year, and subject to fits of love.

Cotton. This passion, then, cannot have had for its object the daughter of Sir George More, whom he saw not until afterward.

Oldways. No, nor was that worthy lady called Margaret, as was this; who scattered so many pearls in his path, he was wont to say, that he trod uneasily on them, and could never skip them.

Walton. Let us look at them in his poetry.

Oldways. I know not whether he would consent thereto, were he living, the lines running so totally on the amorous.

Walton. Faith and troth! we mortals are odd fishes. We care not how many see us in choler, when we rave and bluster and make as much noise and bustle as we can; but if the kindest and most generous affection comes across us, we suppress every sign of it, and hide ourselves in nooks and coverts. Out with the drawer, my dear Oldways: we have seen Donne's sting; in justice to him, let us now have a sample of his honey.

Oldways. Strange that you never asked me before.

Walton. I am fain to write his life, now one can sit by Dove-side and hold the paper upon one's knee, without fear that some unlucky catchpole of a rheumatism tip one upon the shoulder. I have many things to say in Donne's favor: let me add to them, by your assistance, that he not only loved well and truly, as was proved in his marriage,—though like a good angler he changed his fly, and did not at all seasons cast his rod over the same water,—but that his heart opened early to the genial affections; that his satire was only the overflowing of his wit; that he made it administer to his duties; that he ordered it to officiate as he would his curate, and perform half the service of the church for him.

Cotton. Pray, who was the object of his affections?

Oldways. The damsel was Mistress Margaret Hayes.

Cotton. I am curious to know, if you will indulge my curiosity, what figure of a woman she might be.

Oldways. She was of lofty stature, red-haired (which some folks dislike), but with comely white eyebrows, a very slender transparent [12] nose, and elegantly thin lips, covering with due astringency a treasure of pearls beyond price, which, as her lover would have it, she never ostentatiously displayed. Her chin was somewhat long, with what I should have simply called a sweet dimple in it, quite proportionate: but Donne said it was more than dimple; that it was peculiar; that her angelic face could not have existed without it, nor it without her angelic face,—that is, unless by a new dispensation. He was much taken thereby, and mused upon it deeply: calling it in moments of joyousness the cradle of all sweet fancies, and, in hours of suffering from her sedateness, the vale of death.

Walton. So ingenious are men when the spring torrent of passion shakes up and carries away their thoughts, covering (as it were) the green meadow of still homely life with pebbles and shingle,—some colorless and obtuse, some sharp and sparkling.

Cotton. I hope he was happy in her at last.

Oldways. Ha! [13] ha! here we have 'em. Strong lines! Happy, no; he was not happy. He was forced to renounce her, by what he then called his evil destiny; and wishing, if not to forget her, yet to assuage his grief under the impediments to their union, he made a voyage to Spain and the Azores with the Earl of Essex. When this passion first blazed out he was in his twentieth year; for the physicians do tell us that where the genius is ardent the passions are precocious. The lady had profited by many more seasons than he had, and carried with her manifestly the fruits of circumspection. No benefice falling unto him, nor indeed there being fit preparation, she submitted to the will of Providence. Howbeit, he could not bring his mind to reason until ten years after, when he married the daughter of the worshipful Sir George More.

Cotton. I do not know whether the arduous step of matrimony, on which many a poor fellow has broken his shin, is a step geometrically calculated for bringing us to reason; but

[12] First ed. reads: "very slender nose, and thin lips. Her chin," &c.]
[13] From "Ha!" to "obtrusively" (30 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

I have seen passion run up it in a minute, and down it in half a one.

Oldways. Young gentleman! my patron the doctor was none of the light-hearted and oblivious.

Cotton. Truly I should think it a hard matter to forget such a beauty as his muse and his chaplain have described; at least if one had ever stood upon the brink of matrimony with her. It is allowable, I hope, to be curious concerning the termination of so singular an attachment.

Oldways. She would listen to none other.

Cotton. Surely she must have had good ears to have heard one.

Oldways. No pretender had the hardihood to come forward too obtrusively. Donne had the misfortune, as he then thought it, to outlive her, after a courtship of about five years, which enabled him to contemplate her ripening beauties at leisure, and to bend over the opening flowers of her virtues and accomplishments. Alas! they were lost to the world (unless by example) in her forty-seventh spring.

Cotton. He might then leisurely bend over them, and quite as easily shake the seed out as smell them. Did she refuse him, then?

Oldways. He dared not ask her.

Cotton. Why, verily, I should have boggled at that said vale (I think) myself.

Oldways. Izaak! our young friend Master Cotton is not sedate enough yet, I suspect, for a right view and perception of poetry. I doubt whether these affecting verses on her loss will move him greatly; somewhat, yes: there is in the beginning so much simplicity, in the middle so much reflection, in the close so much grandeur and sublimity, no scholar can peruse them without strong emotion. Take, and read them.

Cotton. Come, come; do not keep them to yourself, dad! I have the heart of a man, and will bear the recitation as valiantly as may be.

Walton. I will read aloud the best stanza only. What strong language!

> "Her one hair would hold a dragon,
> Her one eye would burn an earth:
> Fall, my tears! fill each your flagon!
> Millions fall! A dearth! a dearth!"

Cotton. The doctor must have been desperate about the fair Margaret.

Walton. His verses are fine, indeed: one feels for him, poor man!

Cotton. And wishes him nearer to Stourbridge, or some other glass-furnace. He must have been at great charges.

Oldways. Lord help the youth! Tell him, Izaak, *that* is poetical, and means nothing.

Walton. He has an inkling of it, I misgive me.

Cotton. How could he write so smoothly in his affliction, when he exhibited nothing of the same knack afterward?

Walton. I don't know; unless it may be that men's verses, like their knees, stiffen by age.[14]

Oldways. I do like vastly your glib verses; but you cannot be at once easy and majestical.

Walton. It is only our noble rivers that enjoy this privilege. The greatest conqueror in the world never had so many triumphal arches erected to him as our middlesized brooks have.

Oldways. Now, Master Izaak, by your leave, I do think you are wrong in calling them triumphal. The ancients would have it that arches over waters were signs of subjection.

Walton. The ancients may have what they will, excepting your good company for the evening, which (please God!) we shall keep to ourselves. They were mighty people for subjection and subjugation.

Oldways. Virgil says, "Pontem indignatus Araxes."

Walton. Araxes was testy enough under it, I dare to aver. But what have you to say about the matter, son Cotton?

Cotton. I dare not decide either against my father or mine host.

Oldways. So, we are yet no friends.

Cotton. Under favor, then, I would say that we but acknowledge the power of rivers and runlets in bridging them; for without so doing we could not pass. We are obliged to offer them a crown or diadem as the price of their acquiescence.

Oldways. Rather do I think that we are feudatory to them much in the same manner as the dukes of Normandy were to the

[14 First ed. reads: "age. *Cotton.* One would wish the stiffness somewhere else. *Oldways.* Ay, truly, I do like," &c.]

kings of France; pulling them out of their beds, or making them lie narrowly and uneasily therein.

Walton. Is that between thy fingers, Will, another piece of honest old Donne's poetry?

Oldways. Yes; these and one other are the only pieces I have kept: for we often throw away or neglect, in the lifetime of our friends, those things which in some following age are searched after through all the libraries in the world. What[15] I am about to read he composed in the meridian heat of youth and genius.

> "She was so beautiful, had God but died
> For her, and none beside,
> Reeling with holy joy from east to west
> Earth would have sunk down blest;
> And, burning with bright zeal, the buoyant Sun
> Cried through his worlds, '*Well done!*'"

He must have had an eye on the Psalmist; for I would not asseverate that he was inspired, Master Walton, in the theological sense of the word; but I do verily believe I discover here a thread of the mantle.

Cotton. And with enough of the nap on it to keep him hot as a muffin when one slips the butter in.

Oldways. True. Nobody would dare to speak thus but from authority. The Greeks and Romans, he remarked, had neat baskets, but scanty simples; and did not press them down so closely as they might have done, and were fonder of nosegays than of sweet-pots. He told me the rose of Paphos was of one species, the rose of Sharon of another. Whereat he burst forth to the purpose,—

> "Rather give me the lasting rose of Sharon:
> But dip it in the oil that oil'd thy beard, O Aaron!"

Nevertheless, I could perceive that he was of so equal a mind that he liked them equally in their due season. These majestical verses—

Cotton. I am anxious to hear the last of 'em.

Oldways. No wonder: and I will joyfully gratify so laudable a wish. He wrote this among the earliest:—

> "Juno was proud, Minerva stern,
> Venus would rather toy than learn:
> What fault is there in Margaret Hayes?
> Her high disdain and pointed stays."

[15 From "What" to "wish" (28 lines) added in 2nd ed.]

I do not know whether, it being near our dinner-time, I ought to enter so deeply as I could into a criticism on it, which the doctor himself, in a single evening, taught me how to do. Charley is rather of the youngest; but I will be circumspect. That Juno was proud may be learned from Virgil. The following passages in him and other Latin poets—

Cotton. We will examine them all after dinner, my dear sir.

Oldways. The nights are not mighty long; but we shall find time, I trust.

"Minerva stern."

Excuse me a moment: my Homer is in the study, and my memory is less exact than it was formerly.

Cotton. Oh, my good Mr Oldways! do not let us lose a single moment of your precious company. Doctor Donne could require no support from these heathens, when he had the dean and chapter on his side.

Oldways. A few parallel passages. — One would wish to write as other people have written.

Cotton. We must sleep at Uttoxeter.

Oldways. I hope not.

Walton. We must, indeed; and, if we once get into your learning, we shall be carried down the stream without the power even of wishing to mount it.

Oldways. Well, I will draw in, then.

"Venus would rather toy than learn."

Now, Master Izaak, does that evince a knowledge of the world, a knowledge of men and manners, or not? In our days we have nothing like it: exquisite wisdom! Reason and meditate as you ride along, and inform our young friend here how the beautiful trust in their beauty, and how little they learn from experience, and how they trifle and toy. Certainly the Venus here is Venus Urania; the Doctor would dissertate upon none other; yet even she, being a Venus—the sex is the sex—ay, Izaak!

"Her high disdain and pointed stays."

Volumes and volumes are under these words. Briefly, he could

find no other faults in his beloved than the defences of her virgin chastity against his marital and portly ardor. What can be more delicately or more learnedly expressed!

Walton. This is the poetry to reason upon from morning to night.

Cotton. By my conscience is it! He wrongs it greatly who ventures to talk a word about it, unless after long reflection, or after the instruction of the profound author.

Oldways. Izaak, thou hast a son worthy of thee, or about to become so—the son here of thy adoption—how grave and thoughtful!

Walton. These verses are testimonials of a fine fancy in Donne; and I like the man the better who admits Love into his study late and early: for which two reasons I seized the lines at first with some avidity. On second thoughts, however, I doubt whether I shall insert them in my biography, or indeed hint at the origin of them. In the whole story of his marriage with the daughter of Sir George More there is something so sacredly romantic, so full of that which bursts from the tenderest heart and from the purest, that I would admit no other light or landscape to the portraiture. For if there is aught, precedent or subsequent, that offends our view of an admirable character, or intercepts or lessens it, we may surely cast it down and suppress it, and neither be called injudicious nor disingenuous. I think it no more requisite to note every fit of anger or of love, than to chronicle the returns of a hiccup, or the times a man rubs between his fingers a sprig of sweet brier to extract its smell. Let the character be taken in the complex; and let the more obvious and best peculiarities be marked plainly and distinctly, or (if those predominate) the worst. These latter I leave to others, of whom the school is full, who like anatomy the better because the subject of their incisions was hanged. When I would sit upon a bank in my angling, I look for the even turf, and do not trust myself so willingly to a rotten stump or a sharp one. I am not among those who, speaking ill of the virtuous, say, "Truth obliges me to confess—the interests of learning and of society demand from me—" and such things; when this truth of theirs is the elder sister of malevolence, and teaches her half her tricks; and when the interests of learning and of society may be found in

the printer's ledger, under the author's name, by the side of shillings and pennies.

Oldways. Friend Izaak, you are indeed exempt from all suspicion of malignity; and I never heard you intimate that you carry in your pocket the *letters-patent* of society for the management of her interests in this world below. Verily do I believe that both society and learning will pardon you, though you never talk of *pursuing*, or *exposing*, or *laying bare*, or *cutting up*; or employ any other term in their behalf drawn from the woods and forests, the chase and butchery. Donne fell into unhappiness by aiming at espousals with a person of higher condition than himself.

Walton. His affections happened to alight upon one who was; and in most cases I would recommend it rather than the contrary, for the advantage of the children in their manners and in their professions.

Light and worthless men, I have always observed, choose the society of those who are either much above or much below them; and, like dust and loose feathers, are rarely to be found in their places. Donne was none such: he loved his equals, and would find them where he could; when he could not find them, he could sit alone. This seems an easy matter; and yet, masters, there are more people who could run along a rope from yonder spire to this grass-plot, than can do it.

Oldways. Come, gentles: the girl raps at the garden-gate. I hear the ladle against the lock: dinner waits for us.

XVII. MACHIAVELLI AND MICHEL-ANGELO BUONARROTI.[1]

Michel-Angelo. And how do you like my fortifications, Messer Niccolo?

[1 For the details of the history of Florence at the date of this Conversation, see Villari's Life and Times of Machiavelli, vol. iv., chapter xiv., seq. Only a short sketch can be given here. Clement VII., one of the Medici family, was at this time pope, and the Medici were in power at Florence. Charles V. was on the point of sending into Italy the ex-

Machiavelli. It will easily be taken, Messer Michel-Angelo because there are other points—Bello-squardo, for instance, and the Poggio above Boboli—whence every street and edifice may be cannonaded.

Michel-Angelo. Surely you do not argue with your wonted precision, my good friend. Because the enemy may occupy those positions and cannonade the city, is that a reason why our fort of Samminiato should so easily be surrendered?

Machiavelli. There was indeed a time when such an argument would have been futile; but that time was when Florence was ruled by only her own citizens, and when the two factions that devoured her started up with equal alacrity from their prey, and fastened on the invader. But, it being known to Charles that we have neglected to lay in provisions more than sufficient for one year, he will allow our courageous citizens to pelt and scratch and bite his men occasionally for that short time; after which they must surrender. This policy will leave to him the houses and furniture in good condition, and whatsoever fines and taxes may be imposed will be paid the more easily; while the Florentines will be able to boast of their courage and perseverance, the French of their patience and clemency. It will be a good example for other people to follow, and many historians will praise both parties: all will praise one.

I have given my answer to your question; and I now approve and applaud the skill and solidity with which you construct the works, regretting only that we have neither time to erect the others that are necessary, nor to enroll the countrymen who are equally so for their defence. Charles is a prudent and a patient conqueror, and he knows the temper and the power of each

pedition which succeeded in sacking Rome, capturing Florence, and making him master of the whole country. Machiavelli was in the employment of the Medici in Florence, and was appointed chancellor of the curators for the fortification of the city. But before he could make any progress with the work the German army had captured Rome and a revolution in Florence had expelled the Medici. Machiavelli at this time was absent from Florence, and on his return he found a new government, who regarded him as an adherent of the Medici, and refused to employ him. A few days after this disappointment he fell ill and died. Michel-Angelo had already been entrusted with the construction of the fortifications, but it will be seen that no such Conversation can ever have taken place. (Works, ii., 1846. Works, iv., 1876.)]

adversary. He will not demolish nor greatly hurt the city. What he cannot effect by terror, he will effect by time,—that miner whom none can countermine. We have brave men among our citizens,—men sensible of shame and ignominy in enduring the dictation of a stranger, or the domination of an equal; but we have not many of these, nor have they any weight in our councils. The rest are far different, and altogether dissimilar to their ancestors. They, whatever was their faction, contended for liberty, for domestic ties, for personal honour, for public approbation; we, for pictures, for statues, bronze tripods, and tessellated tables: these, and the transient smiles of dukes and cardinals, are deemed of higher value than our heirloom,—worm-eaten, creaking, crazy freedom.

Michel-Angelo. I never thought them so; and yet somewhat of parental love may be supposed to influence me in favour of the fairer, solider, and sounder portion of the things you set before me.

Machiavelli. It is a misfortune to possess what can be retained by servility alone; and the more precious the possession, the greater is the misfortune.

Michel-Angelo. Dukes and cardinals, popes and emperors, cannot take away from me the mind and spirit that God has placed immeasurably high above them. If men are become so vile and heartless as to sit down quietly and see pincers and pulleys tear the sinews of their best benefactors, they are not worth the stones and sand we have been piling up for their protection.

Machiavelli. To rail is indecorous; to reason is idle and troublesome. When you seriously intend to lead people back again to their senses, do not call any man wiser or better than the rabble; for this affronts all, and the bad and strong the most. But tell them calmly that the chief difference between the government of a republic and a dukedom is this,—in a republic there are more deaths by day than by night; in a dukedom, the contrary: that perhaps we see as many taken to prison in a republic; certainly we see more come out.

Michel-Angelo. If any man of reflection needs to be shown the futility and mischief of hereditary power, we Florentines surely may show it to him in the freshest and most striking of examples. Lorenzo de Medici united a greater number of high and amiable

qualities than any other man among his contemporaries; and yet Lorenzo lived in an age which must ever be reckoned most fertile in men of genius and energy. His heart was open to the poor and afflicted; his house, his library, his very baths and bed-rooms, to the philosopher and the poet. What days of my youth have I spent in his society! Even after he was at the head of the commonwealth, he had society; for even then he had fellow-citizens. What lessons has he himself given me in every thing relating to my studies!—in mythology, in architecture, in sculpture, in painting, in every branch and ramification of eloquence! Can I ever forget the hour when he led me by the arm, in the heat of the day, to the eastern [2] door of our baptistery, and said, "Michel-Angelo, this is the only wonder of the world! It rose, like the world itself, out of nothing. Its great maker was without an archetype: he drew from the inherent beauty of his soul. Venerate here its image." It was then I said, "It is worthy to be the gate of Paradise:" and he replied, "The garden is walled up; let us open a space for the portal." He did it, as far as human ability could do it; and, if afterward he took a station which belonged not of right to him, he took it lest it should be occupied by worse and weaker men. His son succeeded to him: what a son! The father thought and told me that no materials were durable enough for my works. Perhaps he erred; but how did Piero correct the error? He employed me in making statues of snow in the gardens of Boboli; statues the emblems at once of his genius and his authority.

Machiavelli. How little foresight have the very wisest of those who invade the liberties of their country!—how little true love for their children!—how little foresight for their descendants, in whose interest they believe they labor! There neither is nor ought to be any safety for those who clap upon our shoulders their heavy pampered children, and make us carry them whether we will or not. Lorenzo was well versed in history: could he for-

[2] The church of San Giovanni has three gates, two of which are designed by Ghiberti. The one called by Michel-Angelo "the Gate of Paradise" is the northern gate, in which alone Ghiberti was allowed to follow his own genius. The eastern gate was also constructed by him, but he was required to make it after the manner of the southern gate, which had been designed by Giotto.]

get, or could he overlook, the dreadful punishments that are the certain inheritance of whoever reaps the harvest of such misdeeds? How many sanguinary deaths by the avenging arm of violated law!—how many assassinations from the people!—how many poisonings and stabbings from domestics, from guards, from kindred! —fratricides, parricides; and that horrible crime for which no language has formed a name,—the bloodshed of the son by the parental hand! A citizen may perhaps be happier, for the moment, by so bold and vast a seizure as a principality; but his successor, born to the possession of supremacy, can enjoy nothing of this satisfaction. For him there is neither the charm of novelty nor the excitement of action, nor is there the glory of achievement; no mazes of perplexing difficulty gone safely through, no summit of hope attained. But there is perpetually the same fear of losing the acquisition, the same suspicion of friends, the same certainty of enemies, the same number of virtues shut out, and of vices shut in, by his condition. This is the end obtained, which is usually thought better than the means. And what are the means, than which this end is better! They are such as, we might imagine, no man who had ever spent a happy hour with his equals would employ, even if his family were as sure of advantage by employing them as we have shown that it is sure of detriment. In order that a citizen may become a prince, the weaker are seduced, and the wiser are corrupted; for wisdom on this earth is earthly, and stands not above the elements of corruption. His successor, finding less tractability, works with harder and sharper instruments. The revels are over, the dream is broken; men rise, bestir themselves, and are tied down. Their confessors and wives console them, saying, "You would not have been tied down had you been quiet." The son is warned not to run into the error of his father, by this clear demonstration: "Yonder villa was his, with the farms about it; he sold it and them to pay the fine."

Michel-Angelo. And are these the doctrines our children must be taught? I will have none, then. I will avoid the marriage-bed as I would the bed of Procrustes. Oh that, by any exertion of my art, I could turn the eyes of my countrymen toward Greece! I wish to excel in painting or in sculpture, partly for my glory, partly for my sustenance, being poor; but

greatly more to arouse in their breasts the recollection of what was higher. Then come the questions, Whence was it?—how was it? Surely, too surely, not by Austrians, French, and Spaniards,—all equally barbarous; though the Spaniards were in contiguity with the Moors, and one sword polished the other.

Machiavelli. The only choice left us was the choice of our enslaver: we have now lost even that. Our wealthier citizens make up their old shopkeeping silks into marquis caps, and tranquilly fall asleep under so soft a coverture. Represent to them what their grandfathers were, and they shake the head with this furred foolery upon it, telling us it is time for the world to go to rest. They preach to us from their new cushions on the sorrowful state of effervescence in our former popular government, and the repose and security to be enjoyed under hereditary princes chosen from among themselves.

Michel-Angelo. Chosen by whom? and from what?—*ourselves?* Well might one of such creatures cry, as Atys did, if like Atys he could recover his senses under a worse and more shameful eviration,—

> Ego non quod habuerim;
> Ego Mænas; ego mei pars; ego vir sterilis ero.
> Jam, jam dolet quod egi!

Yes, indeed, there was all this effervescence. Men spoke loud; men would have their own, although they might have blows with it. And is it a matter of joyance to those wise and sober personages, that the government which reared and nurtured them to all their wisdom and sobriety, and much other more erect and substantial, should be now extinct? Rivers run on and pass away; pools and morasses are at rest for ever. But shall I build my house upon the pool or the morass because it lies so still?—or shall I abstain from my recreation by the river-side because the stream runs on? Whatever you have objected to republicanism may, in its substance a little modified, be objected to royalty, great and small, principalities, and dukedoms. In republics, high and tranquil minds are liable to neglect, and, what is worse, to molestation; but those who molest them are usually grave men or acute ones, and act openly, with fair formalities and professed respect. On the contrary, in

such governments as ours was recently, a young commissary of police orders you to appear before him; asks you first whether you know why he called you; and then, turning over his papers at his leisure, puts to you as many other idle questions as come into his head; remands you; calls you back at the door; gives you a long admonition, partly by order (he tells you) of his superiors, partly his own; bids you to be more circumspect in future, and to await the further discretion of his Excellency the President of the *Buon Governo*. O Messer Niccolo! surely the rack[3] you suffered is more tolerable, not merely than the experience, but even than the possibility, of such arrogance and insult.

Machiavelli. Cæsar's head was placed on the neck of the world, and was large enough for it; but our necks, Messer Michel-Angelo, are grasped, wrung, and contracted for the heads of geese to surmount them. It was not the kick, it was the ass, that made the sick lion roar and die. Either the state of things which you have been describing is very near its termination, or people are growing low enough to accommodate themselves to their abject fortunes. Some fishes, once of the ocean, lost irretrievably, by following up a contracted and tortuous channel, their pristine form and nature, and became of a size and quality for dead or shallow waters, which narrow and weedy and slimy banks confine. There are stages in the manners of principalities, as there are in human life. Princes at first are kind and affable; their successors are condescending and reserved; the next, indifferent and distant; the last, repulsive, insolent, and ferocious, or, what is equally fatal to arbitrary power, voluptuous and slothful. The cruel have many sympathizers; the selfish, few. These wretches bear heavily on the lower classes, and usually fall as they are signing an edict of famine, or protecting a favorite who enforces it. By one or other of these diseases dies arbitrary power; and much and various purification is necessary to render the chamber where it has lain salubrious. Democracies may be longer-lived, although they have enemies in most of the rich, in more of the timorous, and nearly in all the wise. The former will pamper them to feed upon them; the latter will kiss them

[3 Machiavelli was suspected of complicity in the conspiracy of Boscoli and Capponi, against the Medici. See Villari, vol. iii., p. 169.]

to betray them; the intermediate will slink off and wish them well. Those governments alone can be stable, or are worthy of being so, in which property and intellect keep the machine in right order and regular operation: each being conscious that it is the natural ally and reciprocal protector of the other; that nothing ought to be above them; and that what is below them ought to be as little below as possible; otherwise it never can consistently, steadily, and effectually support them. None of these considerations seem to have been ever entertained by men who, with more circumspection and prudence, might have effected the regeneration of Italy. The changes they wished to bring about were entirely for their own personal aggrandizement. Cæsar Borgia and Julius the Second would have expelled all strangers from interference in our concerns. But the former, although intelligent and acute, having a mind less capacious than his ambition; and the latter more ambition than any mind without more instruments could manage; and neither of them the wish or the thought of employing the only means suitable to the end,—their vast, loose projects crumbled under them.

Michel-Angelo. Your opinion of Borgia is somewhat high; and I fancied you did not despise Pope Julius.

Machiavelli. Some of you artists ought to regard him with gratitude; but you yourself must despise the frivolous dotard, who, while he should have been meditating and accomplishing the deliverance of Italy,—which *he* could have done, and *he* only,—was running after you, and breathing at one time caresses, at another time menaces, to bring you back into the Vatican, after your affront and flight. Instead of this grand work of liberation (at least from barbarians) what was he planning? His whole anxiety was about his mausoleum! Now, certainly, Messer Michel-Angelo, the more costly a man's monument is, the more manifest, if he himself orders the erection, must be his consciousness that there is much in him which he would wish to be covered over by it, and much which never was his, and which he is desirous of appropriating. But no monument is a bed capacious enough for his froward and restless imbecilities; and any that is magnificent only shows one the more of them.

Michel-Angelo. He who deserves a mausoleum is not desirous

even of a grave-stone. He knows his mother earth; he frets for no fine cradle, but lies tranquilly and composed at her feet. The pen will rise above the pyramid; but those who would build the pyramid would depress the pen. Julius had as little love of true glory as of civil liberty, which never ruler more pertinaciously suppressed. His only passion, if we may call it one, was vanity. Cæsar Borgia had penetration and singleness of aim,—the great constituents of a great man. His birth, which raised him many favorers in his ascent to power, raised him more enemies in his highest elevation. He had a greater number of friends than he could create of fortunes; and bees, when no hive is vacant, carry their honey elsewhere.

Machiavelli. Borgia[4] was cruel, both by necessity and by nature: now, no cruel prince can be quite cruel enough; when he is tired of striking, he falls. He who is desirous of becoming a prince should calculate first how many estates can be confiscated. Pompey learned and wrote fairly out this lesson of arithmetic; but Julius Cæsar tore the copy-book from his hand and threw it among those behind him, who repeated it in his ear until he gave them the reward of their application.

Michel-Angelo. He alone was able and willing to reform the State. It is well for mankind that human institutions want revisal and repair. Our bodies and likewise our minds require both refreshment and motion; and, unless we attend to the necessities of both, imbecility and dissolution soon ensue. It was as easy, in the Middle Ages, for the towns of Italy to form themselves into republics, which many did, as it was for the villages of Switzerland; and not more difficult to retain their immunities. We are surely as populous, we are as well armed, we are as strong and active, we are as docile to discipline, we are as rich and flourishing: we want only their moral courage, their resolute perseverance, their public and private virtue, their self-respect and mutual confidence. These are indeed great and many wants, and have always been ill-supplied since the extinction of the Gracchi.

[4 As to the security of a tyrant "all depends whether cruelties are well done or ill. Those are well done, if we may speak so of evil deeds, which are done suddenly for the sake of establishing a safe position, and are not continued afterwards. Those are ill done that are long continued." Prince, chap. viii.]

The channel that has been dry so many centuries can only be replenished by a great convulsion. Even now, if ever we rise again to the dignity of men and citizens, it must be from under the shield and behind the broadsword of the Switzers.

Machiavelli. Thirty thousand of them, whenever France resumes her arms against the emperor, might be induced to establish our independence and secure their own, by engaging them to oblige the state of Lombardy first, and successively Rome and Naples, to contribute a subsidy, for a certain number of years, on the overthrow of their infirm and cumbrous governments. The beggars, the idle and indigent of those nations, might, beneficially to themselves, be made provisional serfs to our defenders, who on their part would have duties as imperative to perform. In the Neapolitan and papal territories, there is an immensity of land ill cultivated, or not cultivated at all, claimed and occupied as the property of the government,—enough for all the paupers of Italy to till, and all her defenders to possess. Men must use their hands rightly before they can rightly use their reason: those usually think well who work well. Beside, I would take especial care that they never were in want of religion to instruct and comfort them: they should enjoy a sprinkling of priests and friars, with breviaries and mattocks in the midst of them, and the laborer in good earnest should be worthy of his hire. The feudal system, which fools cry out against, was supremely wise. The truckle-bed of valor and freedom is not wadded with floss-silk: there are gnarls without and knots within; and hard is the bolster of these younger Dioscuri. Genoa, on receiving the dominion of Piedmont, would cede to Tuscany the little she possesses on the south of the Trebbia; Venice would retain what she holds; Bologna would be the capital of all the country to the eastward of the Apennines, from the Po to the Ofanto; Rome, from the sources of the Nar to the mouth of the Tiber (which still should be a Tuscan river, excepting what is within the walls), and southward as far as the Vulturnus; Naples would be mistress of the rest. These seven republics should send each five deputies yearly, for the first twenty days of March, enjoying the means of living splendidly in the apartments of the Vatican. For without a high degree of splendor no magistrate is at all respected in our country, and slightly anywhere else. The consul, invested with the

executive power, should be elected out of the body of legates on the third day of each annual session; he should proceed daily to the hall of deliberation, at the Capitol, in state; the trumpet should sound as he mounts his carriage, drawn by eight horses, and again as he alights; no troops should accompany him, excepting twelve of the civic guard on each side, twelve before and twelve behind, on white chargers richly caparisoned, and appertaining to the consular establishment.

Michel-Angelo. I approve of this; and I should approve as heartily of any means whatsoever by which it might be effected. But it appears to me, Messer Niccolo, that the territories of Rome and Bologna, although the Bolognese would continue to the whole extent of the Apennines, would be less populous than the others.

Machiavelli. Where is the harm of that? A city may be angry and discontented if she cannot tear away somewhat from her neighbors. But, in the system I propose, all enjoy equal laws; and, as it cannot be of the slightest advantage to any town or hamlet to form a portion of a larger State rather than of a smaller, so neither can the smaller State be liable to a disadvantage by any town or hamlet lying out of it. Rome has always been well contented to repose on her ancient glory. She loses nothing by the chain being snapped that held others to her; for it requires no stretch of thought (if it did, I would not ask it of her) to recollect that it held *her* as well as *them.* Bologna's territory would begin with Ferrara on the north, and terminate with the Mediterranean on the south; still, excepting the Roman, it would be the least. Her position will not allow her more, and well is it that it will not. For the priesthood has too long made its holes there, running underground from Rome; and you know, Messer Michel-Angelo, the dairy will smell disagreeably where the rats have burrowed lately.

Michel-Angelo. True enough. Let me now make another remark. Apparently you would allow no greater number of legates from the larger States than from the smaller.

Machiavelli. A small community has need for even more to protect its interests than a larger. He who has a strong body has less occasion for a loud voice, and fewer occasions to cry for

assistance. Five legates from each republic are sufficient in number, if they are sufficient in energy and information. If they are not, the fault lies with their constituents. The more debaters there are the less business will be done, and the fewer inquiries brought to an issue. In federal States, all having the same obligations and essentially the same form of government, hardly is it possible for any two to quarrel; and the interest of the remainder would require, and compel if necessary, a prompt and a firm reconciliation. No State in Europe, desirous of maintaining a character for probity, will refuse to another the surrender of a criminal or debtor who has escaped to avoid that other's laws. If churches and palaces ought not to be sanctuaries for the protection of crime, surely whole kingdoms ought not. Our republics, by avoiding this iniquity, would obviate the most ordinary and most urgent cause of discord. Mortgaging no little of what is called the property of the church (subtracted partly by fraud from ignorance and credulity, and partly torn by violence from debility and dissension), I would raise the money requisite to obtain the co-operation of Switzerland and the alliance of Savoy; but taking care that our own forces much outnumber the allies, and, in case of war, keeping all the artillery in our hands.

Michel-Angelo. But what would you do with the pope?

Machiavelli. A very important consideration. I would establish him in Venice, where he would enjoy many advantages which Rome herself does not afford him. First, he would be successor to Saint Mark as well as to Saint Peter; secondly, he would enjoy the exercise of his highest authority more frequently, by crowning a prince every year in the person of the Doge (for that title, and every other borne by the chief magistrate of each city, should continue), and a princess in the person of the Adriatic, and, moreover, of solemnizing the ceremony of their nuptials; thirdly and what is more glorious, he would be within call of the Bosniacs, who, hearing his paternal voice, would surely renounce their errors, abandon their vices, and come over and embrace the faith. The Bull of Indulgences might be a little modified in their favor. Germans had no objection to the bill of fare, but stamped and sweated to see the price of the dishes, which more elegant men in France and Italy, having tasted them all, thought

reasonable enough. But in Bosnia they must be reduced a trifle lower; else they will be a stumbling-block to the neophyte, whose infirmer knees yet totter in mounting the *Santa Scala.*

Michel-Angelo. Do not joke so gravely, Messer Niccolo; for it vexes and saddens me.

Machiavelli. If you dislike my reasons, take some others very different. The nobility and people of Venice have less veneration for the Holy Father than have the rest of us Catholics, and longer opposed his authority. Beside, as they prefer Saint Mark to Saint Peter, there would always be a salutary irritation kept up in the body of Italy, and all the blood would not run into the head.

Michel-Angelo. Its coagulation there has paralyzed her.

Machiavelli. Furthermore, the Venetians would take measures that Saint Mark should have fair play, and that his part of the pugilistic ring should be as open and wide as the opposite. And now, in order to obtain your pardon for joking so infelicitously, let me acknowledge it among my many infirmities, that I cannot laugh heartily. I experience the same sad constriction as those who cannot bring out a sneeze, or any thing else that would fain have its way. You, however, have marvellously well performed the operation; and now the ripples on lip and cheek, on beard and whisker, have subsided, let me tell you, Messer Michel-Angelo, we form our wisest thoughts and projects on the depth and density of men's ignorance; our strength rises from the vast arena of their weaknesses. I know not when my scheme will be practicable; but it has been, and it may be again.

Michel-Angelo. Finally, what is to become of Sicily, Sardinia, and Corsica?

Machiavelli. I would place these islands at the emperor's disposal, to conciliate him.

Michel-Angelo. It would exasperate France.

Machiavelli. Let him look to that: it would be worth his while. Exasperated or not, France never can rest quiet. Her activity is only in her pugnacity: trade, commerce, agriculture, are equally neglected. Indifferent to the harvests on

the earth before her, she springs on the palm-tree for its scanty fruit.*

Michel-Angelo. She would not be pleased at your allusion.

Machiavelli. I wish she would render it inapplicable. Italy, in despite of her, would become once more the richest and most powerful of nations, the least liable to attacks, and the least interested in disturbing her neighbors. Were she one great kingdom, as some men and all boys desire, she would be perpetually at variance with Hungary, Germany, France, and Spain.[5] The confederacies and alliances of republics are always conducive to freedom, and never are hurtful to independence; those of princes are usually injurious to the liberty of the subject, and often the origin of wars. Federal republics give sureties for the maintenance of peace, in their formation and their position: even those States with which any of them is confederated are as much interested in impeding it from conquests as from subjection. In kingdoms, the case is widely different. Many pestilences grow weaker by length of time and extent of action; but the pestilence of kingly power increases in virulence at every stride and seizure, and expires in the midst of its victims by the lethargy of repletion. At no period of my life have I neglected to warn my fellow-citizens of the fate impending over them. Only a few drops of the sultry and suffocating storm have yet fallen: we stop on the road, instead of pushing on; and, whenever we raise our heads, it will be in the midst of the inundation.

Michel-Angelo. I do believe that Lorenzo would have covered the shame of his parent State, rather than have wantoned with its inebriety.

* The population of France, at this time, amounted to scarcely fourteen millions; Franche-comte, Lorraine, Alsace, and several cities on the borders of the Netherlands, not being yet annexed. Her incessant wars, of late generally disastrous, had depopulated her provinces, and there was less industry than in any other great nation round about her, not excepting the Spanish. Italy was supreme in civilization, commerce, and the fine arts, and was at least as populous as at present.

[5 There can be no doubt that Machiavelli desired the unity of Italy, and that this desire of his is one reason for the admiration which he felt for Cæsar Borgia as long as Cæsar was successful. The views which Landor has put in Machiavelli's mouth he would not have been likely to express himself.]

Machiavelli. He might, by his example and authority, have corrected her abuses; and by his wealth, united to ours, have given work to the poor and idle in the construction of roads, and the excavation of canals through the Maremma.

Michel-Angelo. It was easier to kill Antæus than to lift him from the ground. Lorenzo was unable to raise or keep up Tuscany: he therefore sought the less glorious triumph of leading her captive, laden with all his jewels, and escorted by men of genius in the garb of sycophants and songsters.

Machiavelli. In fact, Messer Michel-Angelo, we had borne too long and too patiently the petulance and caprices of a brawling and impudent democracy. We received instructions from those to whom we should have given them, and we gave power to those from whom we should have received it. Republican as I have lived, and shall die, I would rather any other state of social life than naked and rude democracy: because I have always found it more jealous of merit, more suspicious of wisdom, more proud of riding on great minds, more pleased at raising up little ones above them, more fond of loud talking, more impatient of calm reasoning, more unsteady, more ungrateful, and more ferocious; above all, because it leads to despotism through fraudulence, intemperance, and corruption. Let democracy live among the mountains, and regulate her village, and enjoy her châlet; let her live peacefully and contentedly amid her flocks and herds; never lay her rough hand on the balustrade of the council-chamber; never raise her boisterous voice among the images of liberators and legislators, of philosophers and poets.

Michel-Angelo. In the course of human things, you cannot hinder her. All governments run ultimately into the great gulf of despotism, widen or contract them, straighten or divert them, as you will. From this gulf, the Providence that rules all nature liberates them. Again they return, to be again absorbed, at periods not foreseen or calculable. Every form of government is urged onward by another and a different one. The great receptacle in which so many have perished casts up the fragments, and indefatigable man refits them.

Machiavelli. Other forms may take the same direction as democracy, but along roads less miry, and infested with fewer thieves.

Michel-Angelo. Messer Niccolo, you have spoken like a secretary and a patrician; I am only a mere mason, as you see, and (by your appointment) an engineer. You indeed have great reason to condemn the levity, the stupidity, and the ingratitude of the people. But, if they prefer worse men to better, the fault carries the punishment with it, or draws it after; and the graver the fault the severer the punishment. Neither the populace nor the prince ever chooses the most worthy of all; who indeed, if there were any danger of their choosing him, would avoid the nomination?—for it is only in such days as these that men really great come spontaneously forward, and move with the multitude from the front; stilling the voice of the crier, and scattering the plumes of the impostor. In ordinary times, less men are quite sufficient, and are always ready. In a democracy, the bad may govern when better are less required; but, if they govern injudiciously, the illusion under which they were elected vanishes, the harm they do is brief, and attended by more peril to themselves than to their country. Totally the reverse with hereditary princes: being further from the mass of the community, they know and care little about us; they do not want our votes; they would be angry if we talked of our esteem for them; and, if ever they treat us well, their security, not their sympathy, is the motive. I agree with you, Messer Niccolo, that never were there viler slaves than our populace, except our nobles, and those mongrels and curs intermediate who lean indolently on such sapless trunks, and deem it magnificent to stand one palm higher than the prostrate.

Machiavelli. A fine picture have you been drawing!—another *Last Judgment!*

Michel-Angelo. Your nobility, founded in great measure on yourself, is such that you would accept from me no apology for my remarks on that indiscriminately lavished by our enslavers among later families. None in Tuscany, few in Europe, can contend in dignity with yours, which has given to our republic thirteen chief magistrates. The descendants of a hunter from an Alpine keep in Switzerland can offer no pretence to any thing resembling it. Yet these are they who bind and bruise us!—these are they who impose on us as governors men whom we expunge as citizens.

Machiavelli. In erecting your fortification, you oppose but a temporary obstacle to the insult. My proposal, many years ago, was the institution of national guards;[6] from which service no condition whatever, no age, from adolescence to decrepitude, should be exempt. But Italy must always be in danger of utter servitude, unless her free States, which are still rich and powerful, enter into a cordial and strict alliance against all arbitrary rule, instead of undermining or beating down each other's prosperity. While one great city holds another great city in subjection,—as Venice does with Padua and Verona, as Florence with Siena and Pisa,—the subdued will always rejoice in the calamities of the subduer, and empty her cup of bitterness into them when she can, although without the prospect or hope of recovering her independence. For there are more who are sensible to affronts than there are who are sensible to freedom; and vindictiveness, in many breasts the last cherished relic of justice, is in some the only sign of it.

Michel-Angelo. Small confederate republics are the most free, the most happy, the most productive of emulation, of learning, of genius, of glory, in every form and aspect. They also, for the reason you have given, are stronger and more durable than if united under one principality. This is proved, too, in the history of ancient Tuscany, which, under her Lucumons, resisted for many centuries the violent and vast irruptions of the Gauls, and the systematic encroachments of the wilier Romans. But the governors of no country possess so much wisdom as shall teach them to renounce a portion of immediate authority for the future benefit of those they govern, much less for any advantage to those who lie beyond their jurisdiction.

Machiavelli. Italy, and Europe in general, would avoid the most frequent and the worst calamities by manifold and just federation, to the exclusion of all princes, ecclesiastical and secular. Spain, in the multitude of her municipalities, is divided into republics, but jealous and incoherent. Wiser Germany possesses in many parts the same advantages, and uses them

[6] The proposal was carried out. See Villari, vol. ii., p. 256. Machiavelli's preference for a militia over the mercenaries employed by Italian States was due to his conviction that the creation of a nation could be effected only by creating a national army.]

better; but the dragon's teeth, not sown by herself, shoot up between her cities. Switzerland rears among her snows little, fresh, and stout republics. Italy, in particular, is formed for them: many of her cities being free; all bearing within them the memory, most the desire, of freedom. No pontiff, no despot, can ever be friendly to science; least of all, to that best of sciences which teaches us that liberty and peace are the highest of human blessings. And I wonder that the ministers of religion (at least all of them who believe in it) do not strenuously insist on this truth,—essentially divine, since the founder of Christianity came on earth on purpose to establish peace; and peace cannot exist, and ought not, without liberty. But this blessing is neither the produce nor the necessity of one soil only. How different is the condition of the free cities in Germany from that of territories under the sceptre of princes! If seven or eight are thus flourishing, with such obstacles on every side, why might not the rest without any? What would they all be when hindrances were removed, when mutual intercourse, mutual instruction, mutual advantages of every kind, were unrestricted? Why should not all be as free and happy as the few? They will be, when learning has made way for wisdom; when those for whom others have thought begin to think for themselves. The intelligent and the courageous should form associations everywhere; and little trust should be reposed on the good-will of even good men accustomed to authority and dictation. I venerate the arts almost to the same degree as you do; for ignorance is nowhere an obstacle to veneration: but I venerate them because, above them, I see the light separating from the darkness.

Michel-Angelo. The arts cannot long exist without the advent of freedom. From every new excavation whence a statue rises, there rises simultaneously a bright vision of the age that produced it; a strong desire to bring it back again; a throbbing love, an inflaming regret, a resolute despair, beautiful as Hope herself; and Hope comes, too, behind.

Men are not our fellow-creatures because hands and articulate voices belong to them in common with us: they are then, and then only, when they precede us, or accompany us, or follow us, contemplating one grand luminary, periodically obscured, but

eternally existent in the highest heaven of the soul, without which all lesser lights would lose their brightness, their station, their existence.

If these things should ever come to pass, how bold shall be the step, how exalted the head, of genius! Clothed in glorified bodies of living marble, instructors shall rise out of the earth, deriders of barbarism, conquerors of time, heirs and coequals of eternity. Led on by these, again shall man mount the ladder that touches heaven; again shall he wrestle with the angels.

Machiavelli. You want examples of the arts in their perfection: few models are extant. Apollo, Venus, and three or four beside, are the only objects of your veneration; and, although I do not doubt of its sincerity, I much doubt of its enthusiasm, and the more the oftener I behold them. Perhaps the earth holds others in her bosom more beautiful than the *Mother of Love*, more elevated than the *God of Day*. Nothing is existing of Phidias, nothing of Praxiteles, nothing of Seopas. Their works, collected by Nero, and deposited by him in his Golden Palace, were broken by the populace, and their fragments cast into the Tiber.

Michel-Angelo. All?—surely not all!

Machiavelli. Every one, too certainly. For such was the wealth, such the liberality, of this prince, and so solicitous were all ranks, and especially the higher, to obtain his favor, I entertain no doubt that every work of these consummate masters was among the thousands in his vast apartments. Defaced and fragmentary as they are, they still exist under the waters of the Tiber.

Michel-Angelo. The nose is the part most liable to injury. I have restored it in many heads, always of marble. . But it occurs to me (at this instant, for the first time) that wax would serve better,—both in leaving no perceptible line, and in similarity of color. The Tiber, I sadly fear, will not give up its dead until the last day; but do you think the luxurious cities of Sibaris and Croton hide no treasures of art under their ruins? And there are others in Southern Italy of Greek origin, and rich (no doubt) in similar divine creations. Sculpture awaits but the dawn of freedom to rise up before new worshippers in the fulness of her glory.

Meanwhile I must work incessantly at our fortress here, to protect my poor clay models from the Germans.

Machiavelli. And from the Italians; although the least ferocious in either army would rather destroy a thousand men than the graven image of one.

XVIII. SOUTHEY AND LANDOR.[1]

Southey. Of all the beautiful scenery round King's-weston the view from this terrace, and especially from this sun-dial, is the pleasantest.

Landor. The last time I ever walked hither in company (which, unless with ladies, I rarely have done anywhere) was with a just, a valiant, and a memorable man, Admiral Nichols, who usually spent his summer months at the village of Shirehampton, just below us. There, whether in the morning or evening, it was seldom I found him otherwise engaged than in cultivating his flowers.

Southey. I never had the same dislike to company in my walks and rambles as you profess to have, but of which I perceived no sign whatever when I visited you, first at Lantony Abbey, and afterward on the Lake of Como. Well do I remember our long conversations in the silent and solitary church of Sant' Abondio (surely the coolest spot in Italy), and how often I turned back my head toward the open door, fearing lest some pious passer-by, or some more distant one in the wood above, pursuing the path-

[1 The meeting between Landor and Southey, during which this Conversation might have taken place, must have been in the winter of 1836, or the early spring of the next year. Landor was then living at Clifton, and Southey and he wandered together, revisiting the places Southey had known in his youth. (Life, 372.) King's-weston lies lower down the Avon than Clifton, on the hills above Shirehampton, just as Landor describes it. The two Conversations are taken up with a long criticism of Milton in which Landor shows himself a more reasonable and accurate critic than was common with him. A large number of the references as given in the 1876 edition are incorrect. In the present edition these have been corrected to correspond with the Globe edition of Milton, and others have been added. (Works, ii., 1846. Works, iv., 1876.)]

way that leads to the tower of Luitprand, should hear the roof echo with your laughter at the stories you had collected about the brotherhood and sisterhood of the place.

Landor. I have forgotten most of them, and nearly all; but I have not forgotten how we speculated on the possibility that Milton might once have been sitting on the very bench we then occupied, although we do not hear of his having visited that part of the country. Presently we discoursed on his poetry; as we propose to do again this morning.

Southey. In that case, it seems we must continue to be seated on the turf.

Landor. Why so?

Southey. Because you do not like to walk in company; it might disturb and discompose you: and we never lose our temper without losing at the same time many of our thoughts, which are loath to come forward without it.

Landor. From my earliest days I have avoided society as much as I could decorously, for I received more pleasure in the cultivation and improvement of my own thoughts than in walking up and down among the thoughts of others. Yet, as you know, I never have avoided the intercourse of men distinguished by virtue and genius: of genius, because it warmed and invigorated me by my trying to keep pace with it; of virtue, that if I had any of my own it might be called forth by such vicinity. Among all men elevated in station who have made a noise in the world (admirable old expression!), I never saw any in whose presence I felt inferiority, excepting Kosciusco. But how many in the lower paths of life have exerted both virtues and abilities which I never exerted, and never possessed!—what strength and courage and perseverance in some; in others what endurance and forbearance! At the very moment when most, beside yourself, catching up half my words, would call and employ against me in its ordinary signification what ought to convey the most honorific,—the term *self-sufficiency*,—I bow my head before the humble, with greatly more than their humiliation. You are better-tempered than I am, and readier to converse. There are half-hours when, although in good-humor and good spirits, I would not be disturbed by the necessity of talking, to be the possessor of all the rich marshes we see yonder. In this interval there is neither storm

nor sunshine of the mind, but calm and (as the farmer would call it) *growing* weather, in which the blades of thought spring up and dilate insensibly. Whatever I do, I must do in the open air, or in the silence of night; either is sufficient: but I prefer the hours of exercise, or, what is next to exercise, of field-repose.—Did you happen to know the admiral?

Southey. Not personally; but I believe the terms you have applied to him are well merited. After some experience, he contended that public men, public women, and the public press may be all designated by one and the same trisyllable. He is reported to have been a strict disciplinarian. In the mutiny at the Nore he was seized by his crew, and summarily condemned by them to be hanged. Many taunting questions were asked him, to which he made no reply. When the rope was fastened round his neck, the ringleader cried, "Answer this one thing, however, before you go, sir! What would you do with any of us, if we were in your power as you are now in ours?" The admiral, then captain, looked sternly and contemptuously, and replied, "Hang you, by God!" Enraged at this answer, the mutineer tugged at the rope; but another on the instant rushed forward, exclaiming, "No, captain!" (for thus he called the fellow) "he has been cruel to us, flogging here and flogging there; but before so brave a man is hanged like a dog, you heave me overboard." Others among the most violent now interceded; and an old seaman, not saying a single word, came forward with his knife in his hand, and cut the noose asunder. Nichols did not thank him, nor notice him, nor speak; but, looking round at the other ships, in which there was the like insubordination, he went toward his cabin slow and silent. Finding it locked, he called to a midshipman, "Tell that man with a knife to come down and open the door." After a pause of a few minutes, it was done; but he was confined below until the quelling of the mutiny.

Landor. His conduct as controller of the navy was no less magnanimous and decisive. In this office he presided at the trial of Lord Melville. His lordship was guilty, we know, of all the charges brought against him; but, having more patronage than ever minister had before, he refused to answer the questions which (to repeat his own expression) might incriminate him: and his refusal was given with a smile of indifference, a conscious-

ness of security. In those days, as indeed in most others, the main use of power was promotion and protection; and *honest man* was never in any age among the titles of nobility, and has always been the appellation used toward the feeble and inferior by the prosperous. Nichols said, on the present occasion, "If this man is permitted to skulk away under such pretences, trial is here a mockery." Finding no support, he threw up his office as controller of the navy, and never afterward entered the House of Commons.—Such a person, it appears to me, leads us aptly and becomingly to that steadfast patriot on whose writings you promised me your opinion,—not incidentally, as before, but turning page after page. It would ill beseem us to treat Milton with generalities. Radishes and salt are the *picnic* quota of slim spruce reviewers: let us hope to find somewhat more solid and of better taste. Desirous to be a listener and a learner when you discourse on his poetry, I have been more occupied of late in examining the prose.

Southey. Do you retain your high opinion of it?

Landor. Experience makes us more sensible of faults than of beauties. Milton is more correct than Addison, but less correct than Hooker, whom I wish he had been contented to receive as a model in style, rather than authors who wrote in another and a poorer language; such, I think, you are ready to acknowledge is the Latin.

Southey. This was always my opinion.

Landor. However, I do not complain that in oratory and history his diction is somewhat poetical.

Southey. Little do I approve of it in prose on any subject. Demosthenes and Æschines, Lysias and Isæus, and finally Cicero, avoided it.

Landor. They did: but Chatham and Burke and Grattan did not; nor indeed the graver and greater Pericles, of whom the most memorable sentence on record is pure poetry. On the fall of the young Athenians in the field of battle, he said, "The year hath lost its spring." But how little are these men, even Pericles himself, if you compare them as men of genius with Livy! In Livy, as in Milton, there are bursts of passion which cannot by the nature of things be other than poetical, nor (being so) come forth in other language. If Milton had executed his

design of writing a history of England, it would probably have abounded in such diction, especially in the more turbulent scenes and in the darker ages.

Southey. There are quiet hours and places in which a taper may be carried steadily, and show the way along the ground; but you must stand a-tiptoe and raise a blazing torch above your head, if you would bring to our vision the obscure and time-worn figures depicted on the lofty vaults of antiquity. The philosopher shows everything in one clear light; the historian loves strong reflections and deep shadows, but, above all, prominent and moving characters. We are little pleased with the man who disenchants us; but whoever can make us wonder must himself, we think, be wonderful, and deserve our admiration.

Landor. Believing no longer in magic and its charms, we still shudder at the story told by Tacitus, of those which were discovered in the mournful house of Germanicus.

Southey. Tacitus was also a great poet, and would have been a greater, had he been more contented with the external and ordinary appearances of things. Instead of which, he looked at a part of his pictures through a prism, and at another part through a *camera obscura.* If the historian were as profuse of moral as of political axioms, we should tolerate him less: for in the political we fancy a writer is but meditating; in the moral we regard him as declaiming. In history we desire to be conversant with only the great, according to our notions of greatness; we take it as an affront, on such an invitation, to be conducted into the lecture-room, or to be desired to amuse ourselves in the study.

Landor. Pray, go on. I am desirous of hearing more.

Southey. Being now alone, with the whole day before us, and having carried, as we agreed at breakfast, each his Milton in his pocket, let us collect all the graver faults we can lay our hands upon, without a too minute and troublesome research; not in the spirit of Johnson, but in our own.

Landor. That is, abasing our eyes in reverence to so great a man, but without closing them. The beauties of his poetry we may omit to notice, if we can; but where the crowd claps the hands, it will be difficult for us always to refrain. Johnson, I think, has been charged unjustly with expressing too freely and

inconsiderately the blemishes of Milton. There are many more of them than he has noticed.

Southey. If we add any to the number, and the literary world hears of it, we shall raise an outcry from hundreds who never could see either his excellences or his defects, and from several who never have perused the noblest of his writings.

Landor. It may be boyish and mischievous; but I acknowledge I have sometimes felt a pleasure in irritating, by the cast of a pebble, those who stretch forward to the full extent of the chain their open and frothy mouths against me. I shall seize upon this conjecture of yours, and say every thing that comes into my head on the subject. Beside which, if any collateral thoughts should spring up, I may throw them in also; as you perceive I have frequently done in my *Imaginary Conversations*, and as we always do in real ones.

Southey. When we adhere to one point, whatever the form, it should rather be called a disquisition than a conversation. Most writers of dialogue take but a single stride into questions the most abstruse, and collect a heap of arguments to be blown away by the bloated whiffs of some rhetorical charlatan, tricked out in a multiplicity of ribbons for the occasion.

Before we open the volume of poetry, let me confess to you I admire his prose less than you do.

Landor. Probably because you dissent more widely from the opinions it conveys; for those who are displeased with any thing are unable to confine the displeasure to one spot. We dislike every thing a little when we dislike any thing much. It must indeed be admitted that his prose is often too Latinized and stiff. But I prefer his heavy-cut velvet, with its ill-placed Roman fibula, to the spangled gauze and gummed-on flowers and puffy flounces of our present street-walking literature. So do you, I am certain.

Southey. Incomparably. But let those who have gone astray keep astray, rather than bring Milton into disrepute by pushing themselves into his company and imitating his manner. As some men conceive that, if their name is engraven in Gothic letters with several superfluous, it denotes antiquity of family, so do others that a congestion of words swept together out

of a corner, and dry chopped sentences which turn the mouth awry in reading, make them look like original thinkers. Milton is none of these: and his language is never a patchwork. We find daily, in almost every book we open, expressions which are not English, never were, and never will be: for the writers are by no means of sufficiently high rank to be masters of the mint. To arrive at this distinction, it is not enough to scatter in all directions bold, hazardous, undisciplined thoughts: there must be lordly and commanding ones, with a full establishment of well-appointed expressions adequate to their maintenance.

Occasionally I have been dissatisfied with Milton, because in my opinion that is ill said in prose which can be said more plainly. Not so in poetry: if it were, much of Pindar and Æschylus, and no little of Dante, would be censurable.

Landor. Acknowledge that he whose poetry I am holding in my hand is free from every false ornament in his prose, unless a few bosses of Latinity may be called so,—and I am ready to admit the full claims of your favorite South. Acknowledge that, heading all the forces of our language, he was the great antagonist of every great monster which infested our country; and he disdained to trim his lion-skin with lace. No other English writer has equalled Raleigh, Hooker, and Milton, in the loftier parts of their works.

Southey. But Hooker and Milton, you allow, are sometimes pedantic. In Hooker there is nothing so elevated as there is in Raleigh.

Landor. Neither he, however, nor any modern, nor any ancient, has attained to that summit on which the sacred ark of Milton strikes and rests. Reflections, such as we indulged in on the borders of the Larius, come over me here again. Perhaps from the very sod where you are sitting, the poet in his youth sat looking at the Sabrina he was soon to celebrate. There is pleasure in the sight of a glebe which never has been broken; but it delights me particularly in those places where great men have been before. I do not mean warriors,—for extremely few among the most remarkable of them will a considerate man call great,—but poets and philosophers and philanthropists, the ornaments of society, the charmers of solitude, the warders of civilization, the watchmen at the gate which tyranny would batter down, and the healers of

those wounds which she left festering in the field. And now, to reduce this demon into its proper toad-shape again, and to lose sight of it, open your *Paradise Lost*.

Southey. Shall we begin with it immediately?—or shall we listen a little while to the woodlark? He seems to know what we are about; for there is a sweetness, a variety, and a gravity in his cadences, befitting the place and theme. Another time we might afford the whole hour to him.

Landor. The woodlark, the nightingale, and the ringdove have made me idle for many, even when I had gone into the fields on purpose to gather fresh materials for composition. A little thing turns me from one idleness to another. More than once, when I have taken out my pencil to fix an idea on paper, the smell of the cedar, held by me unconsciously across the nostrils, hath so absorbed the senses, that what I was about to write down has vanished, altogether and irrecoverably. This vexed me; for although we may improve a first thought, and generally do, yet if we lose it, we seldom or never can find another so good to replace it. The lattermath has less substance, succulence, and fragrance than the summer crop. I dare not trust my memory for a moment with any thing of my own: it is more faithful in storing up what is another's. But am I not doing at this instant something like what I told you about the pencil? If the loss of my own thoughts vexed me, how much more will the loss of yours! Now, pray, begin in good earnest.

Southey. Before we pursue the details of a poem, it is customary to look at it as a whole, and to consider what is the scope and tendency, or what is usually called the moral. But surely it is a silly and stupid business to talk mainly about the moral of a poem, unless it professedly be a fable. A good epic, a good tragedy, a good comedy, will inculcate several. Homer does not represent the anger of Achilles as being fatal or disastrous to that hero, which would be what critics call poetical justice; but he demonstrates in the greater part of the *Iliad* the evil effects of arbitrary power, in alienating an elevated soul from the cause of his country. In the *Odyssea* he shows that every obstacle yields to constancy and perseverance; yet he does not propose to show it: and there are other morals no less obvious. Why should the machinery of the longest poem be drawn out to establish an

obvious truth, which a single verse would exhibit more plainly, and impress more memorably? Both in epic and dramatic poetry it is action, and not moral, that is first demanded. The feelings and exploits of the principal agent should excite the principal interest. The two greatest of human compositions are here defective: I mean the *Iliad* and *Paradise Lost*. Agamemnon is leader of the confederate Greeks before Troy, to avenge the cause of Menelaus; yet not only Achilles and Diomed on his side, but Hector and Sarpedon on the opposite, interest us more than the "king of men," the avenger, or than his brother, the injured prince, about whom they all are fighting. In the *Paradise Lost* no principal character seems to have been intended. There is neither truth nor wit however in saying that Satan is hero of the piece, unless, as is usually the case in human life, he is the greatest hero who gives the widest sway to the worst passions. It is Adam who acts and suffers most, and on whom the consequences have most influence. This constitutes him the main character; although Eve is the more interesting, Satan the more energetic, and on whom the greater force of poetry is displayed. The Creator and his angels are quite secondary.

Landor. Must we not confess that every epic hitherto has been defective in plan; and even that each, until the time of Tasso, was more so than its predecessors? Such stupendous genius, so much fancy, so much eloquence, so much vigor of intellect, never were united as in *Paradise Lost*. Yet it is neither so correct nor so varied as the *Iliad*, nor, however important the action, so interesting. The moral itself is the reason why it wearies even those who insist on the necessity of it. Founded on an event believed by nearly all nations, certainly by all who read the poem, it lays down a principle which concerns every man's welfare, and a fact which every man's experience confirms: that great and irremediable misery may arise from apparently small offences. But will any one say that, in a poetical view, our certainty of moral truth in this position is an equivalent for the uncertainty *which* of the agents is what critics call the hero of the piece?

Southey. We are informed in the beginning of the *Iliad* that the poet, or the Muse for him, is about to sing the anger of Achilles, with the disasters it brought down on the Greeks. But

these disasters are of brief continuance, and this anger terminates most prosperously. Another fit of anger, from another motive, less ungenerous and less selfish, supervenes; and Hector falls because Patroclus had fallen. The son of Peleus, whom the poet in the beginning proposed for his hero, drops suddenly out of sight, abandoning a noble cause from an ignoble resentment. Milton, in regard to the discontinuity of agency, is in the same predicament as Homer.

Let us now take him more in detail. He soon begins to give the learned and less obvious signification to English words. In the sixth line,—

That on the secret top, &c.

Here *secret* is in the same sense as Virgil's

Secretosque pios, his dantem jura Catonem.

Would it not have been better to omit the fourth and fifth verses, as encumbrances, and deadeners of the harmony; and for the same reason, the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth?

That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

Landor. Certainly much better: for the harmony of the sentence is complete without them, and they make it gasp for breath. Supposing the fact to be true, the mention of it is unnecessary and unpoetical. Little does it become Milton to run in debt with Ariosto for his

Cose non dette mai né in prosa o in rima.

Prosaic enough in a rhymed romance, for such is the *Orlando* with all its spirit and all its beauty, and far beneath the dignity of the epic.

Southey. Beside, it interrupts the intensity of the poet's aspiration in the words,—

And chiefly thou, O Spirit!

Again: I would rather see omitted the five which follow that beautiful line,—

Dovelike satst brooding on the vast abyss.

Landor. The ear, however accustomed to the rhythm of these sentences, is relieved of a burden by rejecting them; and they are not wanted for any thing they convey.

Southey. I am sorry that Milton (v. 34) did not always keep separate the sublime Satan and "the infernal Serpent." The thirty-eighth verse is the first hendecasyllabic in the poem. It is much to be regretted, I think, that he admits this metre into epic poetry. It is often very efficient in the dramatic, at least in Shakspeare, but hardly ever in Milton. He indulges in it much less fluently in the *Paradise Lost* than in the *Paradise Regained.* In the seventy-third verse he tells us that the rebellious angels are

> As far removed from God and light of heaven
> As from the centre thrice to the utmost pole.

Not very far for creatures who could have measured all that distance, and a much greater, by a single act of the will.

V. 188 ends with the word *repair;* 191 with *despair.*

> 335. Nor did they not perceive the evil plight
> *In which they were.*

Landor. We are oftener in such *evil plight* of floundering in the prosaic slough about your neighborhood than in Bunhill Fields.

> 360. And Powers that erst in heaven sat on throne.

Excuse my asking why you, and indeed most poets in most places, make a monosyllable of *heaven?* I observe you treat *spirit* in the same manner; and although not *peril*, yet *perilous.* I would not insist at all times on an iambic foot, neither would I deprive these words of their right to a participation in it.

Southey. I have seized all fair opportunities of introducing the tribrachys, and these are the words that most easily afford one. I have turned over the leaves as far as verse 584, where I wish he had written *Damascus* (as he does elsewhere) for *Damasco*, which never was the English appellation. Beside, he sinks the last vowel in Meröe in *Paradise Regained*, which follows; and should consistently have done the same in Damasco, following the

practice of the Italian poets, which certainly is better than leaving the vowels open and gaping at one another.

549. Anon they move
In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood.

Thousands of years before there were phalanxes, schools of music, or Dorians.

Landor. Never mind the Dorians, but look at Satan :—

571. And now his heart
Distends with pride, and, hardening in his strength,
Glories !

What an admirable pause is here ! I wish he had not ended one verse with "*his* heart," and the next with "*his* strength."

Southey. What think you of

575. *That small infantry*
Warred on by cranes.

Landor. I think he might easily have turned the flank of *that small infantry*. He would have done much better by writing, not

For never since created man
Met such imbodied force as *named with these*
Could merit more than that small infantry
Warred on by cranes, though all the giant-brood, &c.,

but leaving behind him also these heavy and unserviceable tumbrils, it would have been enough to have written,—

Never since created man,
Met such imbodied force ; though all the brood
Of Phlegra with the Heroic race were joined.

But where, in poetry or painting, shall we find any thing that approaches the sublimity of that description, which begins v. 589 and ends in v. 620 ? What an admirable pause at

Tears, such as angels weep, burst forth !

V. 642. But *tempted* our *attempt*. Such a play on words would be unbecoming in the poet's own person, and even on the

lightest subject, but is most injudicious and intolerable in the mouth of Satan, about to assail the almighty.

672. *Undoubted* sign
That in *his* womb was hid metallic ore.

I know not exactly which of these words induces you to raise your eyes above the book and cast them on me: perhaps both. It was hardly worth his while to display in this place his knowledge of mineralogy, or his recollection that Virgil, in the wooden horse before Troy, had said,—

Uterumque armato milite complent,

and that some modern poets had followed him.

Southey.

675. As when bands
Of pioneers, with spade and pick-axe armed,
Fore-run the royal camp to trench a field
Or cast a rampart.

Nothing is gained to the celestial host by comparing it with the terrestrial. Angels are not promoted by brigading with sappers and miners. Here we are entertained (v. 712) with

Dulcet symphonies . . . and voices *sweet*,

among "pilasters and *Doric* pillars."

Verse 745 is that noble one on Vulcan, who

Dropt from the zenith like a falling star,

Landor. The six following are quite superfluous. Instead of stopping where the pause is so natural and so necessary, he carries the words on,—

Dropt from the zenith, like a falling star,
On Lemnos, the Ægean isle. Thus they relate,
Erring; for he, with this rebellious rout,
Fell long before; nor aught avail'd him now
To have built in heaven high towers, nor did he scape
By all his engines, but was headlong *sent*
With his *industrious* crew to build in hell.

My good Milton! why in a passion? If he was sent to build in

hell, and *did* build there, give the Devil his due; and acknowledge that on this one occasion he ceased to be rebellious.

Southey. The verses are insufferable stuff, and would be ill placed anywhere.

Landor. Let me remark that in my copy I find a mark of elision before the first letter in *scape.*

Southey. The same in mine.

Landor. *Scaped* is pointed in the same manner at the beginning of the fourth book. But Milton took the word directly from the Italian *scappare*, and committed no mutilation. We do not always think it necessary to make the sign of an elision in its relatives, as appears by *scape-grace.* In verse 752, what we write *herald* he more properly writes *harald;* in the next *sovran* equally so, following the Italian rather than the French.

Southey. At verse 768 we come to a series of twenty lines, which, excepting the metamorphosis of the Evil Angels, would be delightful in any other situation. The poem is much better without these. And, in these verses, I think there are two whole ones and two hemistichs which you would strike out:—

> As bees
> In spring-time, when the sun with Taurus rides,
> Pour forth their populous youth about the hive
> In clusters: they among fresh dews and flowers
> Fly to and fro, or on the smoothened plank,
> The suburb of their straw-built citadel,
> New rubbed with balm, expatiate and confer
> Their state affairs. So thick the aery crowd, &c.

Landor. I should be sorry to destroy the suburb of the straw-built citadel, or even to remove the smoothened[2] plank, if I found them in any other place. Neither the harmony of the sentence, nor the propriety and completeness of the simile, would suffer by removing all between "*to and fro,*" and "*so thick,*" &c. But I wish I had not been called upon to "*Behold a wonder.*"

Southey. (Book II.)

> High on a throne of royal state, which far
> Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
> *Or* where the gorgeous east, &c.

[2 Globe ed. reads: "smoothed."]

Are not Ormus and Ind within the gorgeous East? If so, would not the sense be better if he had written, instead of "*Or* where," "*There* where"?

Landor. Certainly.

Southey. Turn over, if you please, another two or three pages, and tell me whether in your opinion the 150th verse,—

> In the wide womb of uncreated night,

—might not also have been omitted advantageously.

Landor. The sentence is long enough and full enough without it; and the omission would cause no visible gap.

Southey.

> 226. Thus Belial, with words clothed in reason's garb,
> Counsel'd *ignoble ease and peaceful sloth*,
> *Not peace.*

These words are spoken by the poet in his own person, very improperly: they would have suited the character of any fallen angel; but the reporter of the occurrence ought not to have delivered such a sentence.

> 299. Which when Beelzebub perceived (than whom,
> Satan except, none higher sat) with grave
> Aspect he rose, and in his rising seem'd
> A pillar of State. Deep on his front engraven
> Deliberation sat and public care;
> And princely counsel in his face yet shone
> Majestic, though in ruin: sage he stood,
> With Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear
> The weight of mightiest monarchies.

Often and often have these verses been quoted, without a suspicion how strangely the corporeal is substituted for the moral. However Atlantean his shoulders might be, the weight of monarchies could no more be supported by them than by the shoulders of a grasshopper. The verses are sonorous; but they are unserviceable as an incantation to make a stout figure look like a pillar of State.

Landor. We have seen pillars of State which made no figure at all, and which are quite as misplaced as Milton's. But, seriously, the pillar's representative, if any figure but a meta-

phorical one could represent him, would hardly be brought to represent the said pillar by *rising* up; as,—

Beelzebub in his *rising* seem'd, &c.

His fondness for Latinisms induces him to write,—

329. *What* sit we then projecting peace and war?

For "*Why sit we?*" as *quid* for *cur*. To my ear, *What sit* sounds less pleasingly than *Why sit*.

I have often wished that Cicero, who so delighted in harmonious sentences, and was so studious of the closes, could have heard,—

351. So was his will
Pronounced among the Gods, and, by an oath
That shook heaven's whole circumference, confirm'd.

Although in the former part of the sentence two cadences are the same,—

So was his will,
And by an oath.

This is unhappy. But at verse 412 bursts forth again such a torrent of eloquence as there is nowhere else in the regions of poetry, although *strict* and *thick*, in v. 412 sound unpleasantly.

594. The parching wind[3]
Burns frore, *and cold performs the effect of fire!*

The latter part of this verse is redundant, and ruinous to the former.

Southey. Milton, like Dante, has mixed the Greek mythology with the Oriental. To hinder the damned from tasting a single drop of the *Lethe*, they are *ferried* over:—

611. *Medusa* with Gorgonian terror guards
The ford.

It is strange that until now they never had explored the banks of the other four infernal rivers.

Landor. It appears to me that his imitation of Shakspeare,—

From beds of raging fire to starve in ice,

[3 Globe ed. reads: "air."]

—is feeble. Never was poet so little made to imitate another. Whether he imitates a good or a bad one, the offence of his voluntary degradation is punished in general with ill success. Shakspeare, on the contrary, touches not even a worthless thing but he renders it precious.

Southey. To continue the last verse I was reading,—

> And of itself the water flies
> All taste of living wight, as *once* it fled
> The lip of Tantalus.

No living wight had ever attempted to taste it; nor was it *this* water that fled the lip of Tantalus at any time; least of all can we imagine that it had already fled it. In the description of Sin and Death, and Satan's interview with them, there is a wonderful vigor of imagination and of thought, with such sonorous verse as Milton alone was capable of composing. But there is also much of what is odious and intolerable. The terrific is then sublime, and then only, when it fixes you in the midst of all your energies; and not when it weakens, nauseates, and repels you.

> 678. God and his Son except,
> Created thing naught valued he.

This is not the only time when he has used such language, evidently with no other view than to defend it by his scholarship. But no authority can vindicate what is false, and no ingenuity can explain what is absurd. You have remarked it already in the *Imaginary Conversations*, referring to

> *The fairest of her daughters, Eve.*

There is something not dissimilar in the form of expression, when we find on a sepulchral stone the most dreadful of denunciations against any who should violate it:—

> Ultimus suum moriatur.

Landor. I must now be the reader. It is impossible to refuse the ear its satisfaction at

> [614.] Thus roving on
> In confused march forlorn, the adventurous bands
> With shuddering horror pale and eyes aghast,

View'd first their lamentable lot, and found
No rest. Through many a dark and dreary vale
They past, and many a region dolorous;
O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp,
Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death,
A universe of death.

Now who would not rather have forfeited an estate, than that Milton should have ended so deplorably?—

Which God by curse
Created evil, *for evil only good,*
Where all life dies, death lives.

Southey. How Ovidian! This book would be greatly improved, not merely by the rejection of a couple such as these, but by the whole from verse 647 to verse 1007. The number would still be 705,—fewer by only sixty-four than the first would be after its reduction.

Verses 1008 and 1009 could be spared. Satan but little encouraged his followers by reminding them that, if they took the course he pointed out, they were

So much the nearer danger;

nor was it necessary to remind them of the obvious fact by saying,—

Havoc and spoil and ruin are my gain.[4]

Landor. In the third book the Invocation extends to fifty-five verses; of these, however, there are only two which you would expunge. He says to the *Holy Light*,—

But thou
Revisit'st not these eyes, that toil in vain
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;
So thick a *drop serene* hath quencht their orbs,
Or dim suffusion veiled. Yet not the more, &c.

[4 This criticism is very much confused. Southey wishes to exclude the meeting with Sin and Death, and, apparently, the whole of Satan's journey through chaos. Where he intended to take up the action again it is difficult to say; but as he considers verses 1008 and 1009 to be at the end of Satan's speech to his followers, it is plain that he had no very clear idea himself. The verses, of course, come at the end of the speech by Chaos.]

The fantastical Latin expression *gutta serena*, for amaurosis, was never received under any form into our language; and a *thick drop serene* would be nonsense in any. I think every reader would be contented with,—

> To find thy piercing ray. Yet not the more
> Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt, &c.

Southey. Pope is not highly reverent to Milton, or to God the Father, whom he calls a *schoool-divine*. The doctrines, in this place (v. 80) more Scripturally than poetically laid down, are apostolic. But Pope was unlikely to know it: for, while he was a papist, he was forbidden to read the Holy Scriptures; and, when he ceased to be a papist, he threw them overboard and clung to nothing. The fixedness of his opinions may be estimated by his having written at the commencement of his *Essay*, first,—

> A mighty maze, a maze without a plan;

And then,—

> A mighty maze, *but not* without a plan.

After the seventy-sixth verse, I wish the poet had abstained from writing all the rest until we come to 345; and that after the 382d, from all that precede the 418th. Again, all between 462 and 497. This about the Fool's Paradise,—

> The indulgences, dispenses, pardons, bulls,

—is too much in the manner of Dante, whose poetry, admirable as it often is, is at all times very far removed from the dramatic and the epic.

Landor. Verse 586 is among the few inharmonious in this poem,—

> Shoots invisible virtue even to the deep.

There has lately sprung up among us a Vulcan-descended body of splay-foot poets, who, unwilling

> Incudi reddere versus,

or unable to hammer them into better shape and more solidity, tell us how necessary it is to shovel in the dust of a discord now

and then. But Homer and Sophocles and Virgil could do without it.

What a beautiful expression is there in verse 546, which I do not remember that any critic has noticed!—

Obtains the brow of some *high-climbing* hill.

Here the hill itself is instinct with life and activity.

Verse 574. "*But up or down*" in "*longitude*" are not worth the parenthesis.

[iv. 109.] Farewell remorse! all good to me is lost.

Nothing more surprises me in Milton than that his ear should have endured this verse.

Southey. How admirably contrasted with the malignant spirit of Satan, in all its intensity, is the scene of Paradise which opens at verse 131! The change comes naturally and necessarily to accomplish the order of events.

The fourth book contains several imperfections. The six verses after 181 efface the delightful impression we had just received.

At one slight *bound* high overleapt all *bound*.

Such a play on words, so grave a pun, is unpardonable: and such a prodigious leap is ill represented by the feat of a wolf in a sheepfold; and still worse by

A thief bent to unhoard the *cash*
Of some rich burgher, whose substantial doors,
Cross-barr'd and bolted fast, fear no assault,
In at the window climbs, or o'er the tiles.

Landor. This "in at the window" is very unlike the "bound high above all bound;" and *climbing* "o'er the tiles" is the practice of a more deliberate burglar.

So since into his church lewd hirelings climb.

I must leave the lewd hirelings where I find them: they are too many for me. I would gladly have seen omitted all between verses 160 and 205.

Southey.

[252.] Betwixt them lawns or level downs, and flocks
Grazing the tender herb.

There had not yet been time for flocks, or even for one flock.

Landor. At verse 297 commences a series of verses so harmonious that my ear is impatient of any other poetry for several days after I have read them. I mean those which begin,—

> For contemplation he and valor formed,
> For softness she and sweet attractive grace;

and ending with,—

> And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay.

Southey. Here, indeed, is the triumph of our language, and I should say of our poetry, if, in your preference of Shakspeare, you could endure my saying it. But, since we seek faults rather than beauties this morning, tell me whether you are quite contented with,—

> She, as a veil, down to the slender waist
> Her unadorned golden tresses wore,
> Dishevel'd, but in wanton ringlets waved
> As the vine curls her tendrils; *which implied*
> *Subjection, but required with gentle sway,*
> *And by her yielded, by him best received.*

Landor. Stopping there, you break the link of harmony just above the richest jewel that poetry ever wore:—

> Yielded with coy submission, modest pride,
> And sweet, reluctant, amorous delay.

I would rather have written these two lines than all the poetry that has been written since Milton's time in all the regions of the earth. We shall see again things equal in their way to the best of them; but here the sweetest of images and sentiments is seized and carried far away from all pursuers. Never tell me, what I think is already on your lips, that the golden tresses in their wanton ringlets implied nothing like subjection. Take away, if you will,—

> And by her yielded, by him best received;

and all until you come to,—

[325.] Under a tuft of shade.

Southey. In verse 388, I wish he had employed some other epithet for *innocence* than *harmless.*

Verses 620 and 621 might be spared:—

> While other animals *inactive* range,
> *And of their doings God takes no account.*

660. Daughter of God and *man*, accomplisht Eve!

Surely she was not daughter of *man;* and, of all the words that Milton has used in poetry or prose, this *accomplisht* is the worst. In his time it had already begun to be understood in the sense it bears at present.

Verse 674. "*These, then, tho'*,"—harsh sounds so near together.

700. *Mosaic;* underfoot the violet,
Crocus, and hyacinth, with rich inlay
Broidered the ground, more colored than with stone
Of costliest emblem.

The *broidery* and *mosaic* should not be set quite so closely and distinctly before our eyes. I think the passage might be much improved by a few defalcations. Let me read it:—

> The roof
> Of thickest covert was inwoven shade,
> Laurel and myrtle, and what higher grew
> Of firm and fragrant leaf; the violet,
> Crocus, and hyacinth.

I dare not handle the embroidery. Is not this sufficiently verbose?

Landor. Quite.

Southey. Yet, if you look into your book again, you will find a gap as wide as the bank on either side of it:—

> On either side
> Acanthus and each odorous bushy shrub
> *Fenced up* the verdant wall; each beauteous flower,
> Iris all hues, roses and jessamin
> Reared *high* their *flourished* heads between, and *wrought*
> *Mosaic.*

He had before told us that there was every tree of *fragrant* leaf: we wanted not "each *odorous* shrub." Nor can we imagine

how it *fenced up* a verdant wall: it constituted one itself; one very unlike any thing else in Paradise, and more resembling the topiary artifices which had begun to flourish in France. Here is indeed an exuberance, and "a wanton growth that mocks our scant manuring."

705. In shadier bower
More sacred and sequestered, *though but feign'd*,
Pan or Sylvanus never slept.

He takes especial heed to guard us against the snares of Paganism, at the expense of his poetry. In Italian books, as you remember, where Fate, Fortune, Pan, Apollo, or any mythological personage is named incidentally, notice is given at the beginning that no harm is intended thereby to the Holy Catholic-Apostolic religion. But harm is done on this occasion, where it is intended just as little.

[719.] On him *who had stole* Jove's authentic fire.

This is a very weak and unsatisfactory verse. By one letter it may be much improved,—*stolen*, which also has the advantage of rendering it grammatical. The word *who* coalesces with *had*. Of such coalescences the poetry of Milton is full. In five consecutive lines you find three :—

[iii. 398.] Thee only extolled, Son of thy Father's might
To execute his vengeance on his foes,
Not so on man; him through their malice fallen,
Father of mercy and grace thou didst not doom
So strictly, but much more to pity inclined.

722. The God that made *both* sky, air, earth, and heaven.

Both must signify two things or persons, and never can signify more.

From verse 735 I would willingly see all removed until we come to,—

Hail, wedded love!

After these eight I would reject thirteen.

In verses 773 and 774 there is an unfortunate recurrence of sound :—

The flowery roof
Showered roses which the morn *repaired*. Sleep on
Blest *pair!*

And somewhat worse in the continuation,—

And O yet happiest, if ye seek
No happier state, and *know to know no more.*

Five similar sounds in ten syllables, besides the affectation of "know to know."

780. To their night watches in warlike parade,

is not only a slippery verse in the place where it stands, but is really a verse of quite another metre. And I question whether you are better satisfied with the word *parade*.

814. As when a spark
Lights on a heap of nitrous powder, *laid*
Fit for the tun, some magazine to store
Against a rumored war.

Its fitness for the tun and its convenience for the magazine adapt it none the better to poetry. Would there be any detriment to the harmony or the expression, if we skip over that verse, reading,—

Stored
Against a rumored war?

Landor. No harm to either. The verses 933 and 934, I perceive, have the same cesura, and precisely that which rhyme chooses in preference, and Milton in his blank verse admits the least frequently.

A faithful leader, not to hazard all,
Through ways of danger by himself untried.

Presently, what a flagellation he inflicts on the traitor Monk!—

[947.] To say and straight unsay, pretending first
Wise to fly pain, professing next the spy,
Argues no leader, *but a liar traced.*

When he loses his temper he loses his poetry, in this place and

most others. But such coarse hemp and wire were well adapted to the stripped shoulders they scourged.

> Satan! and couldst thou *faithful* add? O name!
> O sacred name of faithfulness profaned!
> Faithful to whom? to thy rebellious crew?
> Army of fiends, fit body to fit head,
> Was this your discipline and faith engaged?
> Your military obedience, to dissolve
> Allegiance to the acknowledged Power supreme?
> And thou, sly hypocrite, who now wouldst seem
> Patron of liberty, who more than thou
> Once fawned and cringed?

You noticed the rhyme of *supreme* and *seem*. Great heed should be taken against this grievous fault, not only in the final syllables of blank verse, but also in the cesuras. In our blank verse, it is less tolerable than in the Latin heroic, where Ovid and Lucretius, and Virgil himself, are not quite exempt from it.

Southey. It is very amusing to read Johnson for his notions of harmony. He quotes these exquisite verses, and says, "There are two lines in this passage more remarkably inharmonious."

[720.]

> This delicious place,
> For us too large, *where thy* abundance wants
> Partakers, and uncropt *falls to* the ground.

There are few so dull as to be incapable of perceiving the beauty of the rhythm in the last. Johnson goes out of his way to censure the best thought and the best verse in Cowley:—

> And the soft wings of Peace *cover him* round.

Certainly, it is not iambic where he wishes it to be. Milton, like the Italian poets, was rather too fond of this cadence; but, in the instances which Johnson has pointed out for reprobation, it produces a fine effect. So in the verse,—

> Not Typhon huge, ending in snaky twine.

It does the same in *Samson Agonistes*:—

> Retiring from the popular noise, I seek
> This unfrequented place, to find some ease,—
> Ease to the body some, *none to* the mind.

Johnson tells us that the third and seventh are weak syllables,

and that the period leaves the ear unsatisfied. Milton's ear happened to be satisfied by these pauses; and so will any ear be that is not (or was not intended by nature to be) nine fair inches long. Johnson is sensible of the harmony which is produced by the pause on the sixth syllable; but commends it for no better reason than because it forms a complete verse of itself. There can be no better reason against it.

In regard to the pause at the third syllable, it is very singular and remarkable that Milton never has paused for three lines together on any other point. In the 327th, 328th, and 329th of *Paradise Lost*, are these:—

[Bk. i., 326.] His swift pursuers from heaven's gates pursue[5]
The advantage, and descending tread us down,
Thus drooping, or with linked thunderbolts
Transfix us to the bottom of this gulf.

Another, whose name I have forgotten, has censured in like manner the defection and falling off in the seventh syllable of that very verse, which I remember your quoting as among the innumerable proofs of the poet's exquisite sensibility and judgment,—

[ii., 873.] And toward the gate *rolling* her bestial train,

where another would have written

And rolling toward the gate, &c.

On the same occasion, you praised Thomson very highly for having once written a most admirable verse where an ordinary one was obvious:—

And tremble every feather with desire.

Pope would certainly have preferred

And every feather trembles with desire.

So would Dryden, probably. Johnson, who censures some of the most beautiful lines in Milton, praises one in Virgil, with as little judgment. He says, "We hear the passing arrow,"—

Et fugit *horrendùm stridens* elapsa sagitta.

Now there never was an arrow in the world that made a *horrible*

[5 Globe ed. reads: "discern."]

stridor in its course. The only sound is a very slight one occasioned by the feather. Homer would never have fallen into such an incongruity.

How magnificent is the close of this fourth book, from,—

[970.] Then when I am thy captive!

Landor. I do not agree to the use of golden scales, not figurative but real jeweller's gold, for weighing events:—

[1002.] *Battles* and realms. In these he put two *weights*,
The sequel each of parting and of fight;
The latter *quick* up-flew and *kicked* the beam.

To pass over the slighter objection of *quick* and *kick* as displeasing to the ear, the vulgarity of *kicking the beam* is intolerable. He might as well, among his angels, and among sights and sounds befitting them, talk of *kicking the bucket*. Here, again, he pays a penalty for trespassing.

Southey. I doubt whether (fifth book) there ever was a poet in a warm or temperate climate, who at some time or other of his life has not written about the nightingale. But no one rivals or approaches Milton in his fondness or his success. However, at the beginning of this book, in a passage full of beauty, there are two expressions, and the first of them relates to the nightingale, which I disapprove:—

41. Tunes sweetest his *love-labored song*.

In *love-labored*, the ear is gained over by the sweetness of the sound; but in the nightingale's song there is neither the reality nor the appearance of labor.

43. *Sets off* the face of things,

is worthier of Addison than of Milton.

100. But know that in the soul, &c.

This philosophy on dreams, expounded by Adam, could never have been hitherto the fruit of his experience or his reflection.

Landor.

153. These are thy glorious works, &c.

Who could imagine that Milton, who translated the Psalms worse than any man ever translated them before or since, should in this glorious hymn have made the 148th so much better than the original? But there is a wide difference between being bound to the wheels of a chariot and guiding it. He has ennobled that more noble one,—

O all ye works of the Lord, &c.

But in

185. Ye mists and exhalations that now rise
From hill or streaming lake, dusky or gray,
Till the sun *paint* your fleecy skirts with *gold*, &c.

Such a verse might be well ejected from any poem whatsoever; but here its prettiness is quite insufferable. Adam never knew any thing either of paint or gold. But, casting out this devil of a verse, surely so beautiful a psalm or hymn never rose to the Creator.

Southey. "No fear lest dinner cool" (v. 396) might as well never have been thought of: it seems a little too jocose. The speech of Raphael to Adam, on the subject of eating and drinking and the consequences, is neither angelic nor poetical; but the Sun *supping* with the Ocean is at least Anacreontic, and not very much debased by Cowley.

[433.] So *down they sat*
And to their viands *fell.*

Landor.

711. Meanwhile the eternal eye, whose sight discerns
Abstrusest thoughts, from forth his holy mount
And from within the golden lamps that burn
Nightly before him, saw without their light
Rebellion rising, &c.
And smiling to his only Son thus said, &c.

Bentley, and several such critics of poetry, are sadly puzzled, perplexed, and irritated at this. One would take refuge with the first grammar he can lay hold on, and cry *pars pro toto*; another strives hard for another suggestion. But if Milton by accident had written both *Eternal* and *Eye* with a capital

letter at the beginning, they would have perceived that he had used a noble and sublime expression for the Deity. No one is offended at the words: "It is the will of Providence," or "It is the will of the Almighty;" yet Providence is that which *sees before*, and *will* is different from *might*. True it is that Providence and Almighty are qualities converted into appellations, and are well known to signify the Supreme Being; but if the Eternal Eye is less well known to signify him, or not known at all, that is no reason why it should be thought inapplicable. It might be used injudiciously: for instance, the *right hand* of the Eternal Eye would be singularly so; but *smiles* not. The Eternal Eye *speaks* to his only Son. This is more incomprehensible to the critics than the preceding. And truly if that eye were like ours, and the organ of speech like ours also, it might be strange. Yet the very same good people have often heard without wonder of a *speaking* eye in a very ordinary person, and are conversant with poets who precede an expostulation, or an entreaty for a reply with "*Lux* mea." There is a much greater fault, which none of them has observed, in the beginning of the speech: —

[719.] Son! thou in whom my glory I behold
In full resplendence! *heir* of all my might.

Now an *heir* is the future and not the present possessor; and he to whom he is heir must be extinct before he comes into possession. But this is nothing if you compare it with what follows, a few lines below: —

[729.] Let us advise and to this hazard draw
With speed what force is left, and all employ
In our defence, *lest unawares we lose*
This our high place, our sanctuary, our hill.

Such expressions of derision are very ill-applied, and derogate much from the majesty of the Father. We may well imagine that far different thoughts occupied the Divine mind at the defection of innumerable angels, and their inevitable and everlasting punishment.

Southey. The critics do not agree on the meaning of the words,—

799. Much less for *this* to be our Lord.

Nothing, I think, can be clearer, even without the explanation which is given by Abdiel in verse 813 :—

> Canst thou with impious obloquy condemn
> The just decree of God, pronounced and sworn
> That to *his only Son*, by right endued
> With royal sceptre, every soul in heaven
> *Shall bend the knee?*

V. 869. There are those who cannot understand the plainest things, yet who can admire every fault that any clever man has committed before. Thus, *beseeching* or *besieging*, spoken by an angel, is thought proper, and perhaps beautiful, because a quibbler in a Latin comedy says, *amentium haud amantium.* It appears, then, on record that the first overt crime of the refractory angels was *punning :* they fell rapidly after that.

Landor.

870. *These tidings carry to the anointed king.*

Whatever *anointing* the kings of the earth may have undergone, the King of Heaven had no occasion for it. Who anointed him? When did his reign commence?

874. *Through the infinite host.*

Although our poet would have made no difficulty of accenting "infinite" as we do, and as he himself has done in other places, I am inclined to think that the accent is here on the second syllable. He does not always accentuate the same word in the same place. In verse 888, Bentley and the rest are in a bustle about,—

> *Well didst thou advise;*
> *Yet not for thy advice or threats I fly*
> *These wicked hosts*[6] *devoted, lest the wrath, &c.*

One suggests one thing, another another; but nothing is more simple and easy than the construction, if you put a portion of the second verse in a parenthesis, thus,—

> Yet (not for thy advice or threats), &c.

Southey. The archangel Michael is commanded (Book VI.,

[6 Globe ed. reads: "tents."]

v. 44) to do what the Almighty, who commands it, gave him not strength to do, as we find in the sequel, and what was reserved for the prowess of the Messiah.

Landor. V. 115. "Where faith and realty," &c. Bentley, more unlucky than ever, here would substitute *fealty*, as if there were any difference between *fealty* and *faith*: *reale* and *leale* are the same in Italian.

Southey.

160. Before thy fellows, ambitious to win, &c.

Surely this line is a very feeble one, and where so low a tone is not requisite for the harmony or effect of the period. But the battle of Satan and Michael is worth all the battles in all other poets. I wish, however, I had not found

[332.] A stream of *nectarous* humor issuing.

The *ichor* of Homer has lost its virtue by exposure and application to ordinary use. Yet even this would have been better.

[335.] Forthwith on all sides to his aid *was run*
By angels.

This Latinism is inadmissible; there is no loophole in our language for its reception. He once uses the same form in his History: "Now was fought eagerly on both sides." Even here the word *it* should have preceded, and the phrase would still remain a stiff intractable Latinism. In the remainder of this book there are much graver faults, amid highest beauty. Surely it was unworthy of Milton to follow Ariosto and Spenser, and many others, in dragging up his cannon from hell; although it is not, as in the *Faërie Queen*, represented to us distinctly,—

Ram'd with bullets round.

Landor. I wish he had omitted all from verse 483,—

Which into hollow engines, *long and round*
Thick ramm'd at *the other bore*,

—down to 523; and again from 546, "barbed with fire," to

verse 628, where the wit, which Milton calls the *pleasant vein*, is worthy of newly-made devils who never had heard any before, and falls as foul on the poetry as on the antagonist.

[656.] Their *armour* helpt their *harm*.

Here *helpt* means *increased*. A few lines above, we find "*Light* as the *lightning* glimpse." We should have quite enough of this description if at verse 628 we substituted *but* for *so*, and continued to verse 644, "They pluckt the seated hills," skipping over all until we reach 654,—

Which in the air, &c.

Southey. I think I would go much farther, and make larger defalcations. I would lop off the whole from "Spirits of purest light," verse 660 to 831; then (for *He*) reading, "God on his impious foes," as far as 843, "his ire." Again, omitting nine verses, to "yet half his strength." The 866th line is not a verse: it is turned out of an Italian mould, but in a state too fluid and incohesive to stand in English. This book should close with,—

[874.] Hell at last
Yawning received them whole, and on them clos'd.

Landor. The poem would indeed be much the better for all the omissions you propose; if you could anywhere find room for those verses which begin at the 760th, "He in celestial panoply," and end with that sublime,—

He onward came: far off his coming shone.

The remainder, both for the subject and the treatment of it, may be given up without a regret. The last verse of the book falls "succiso poplite,"—

Remember; *and fear to transgress.*

Beautiful as are many parts of the Invocation at the commencement of the seventh book, I should more gladly have seen it without the first forty lines, and beginning,—

The affable archangel.

Southey.

[126.] But knowledge is as food, and needs no less
Her temperance over appetite,

He might have ended here. He goes on thus:—

to know
In measure what the mind may well contain.

Even this does not satisfy him: he adds,—

Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
Wisdom to folly, as *nourishment to wind.*

Now, certainly Adam could never yet have known any thing about the meaning of surfeit; and we may suspect that the angel himself must have been just as ignorant on a section of physics which never had existed in the world below, and must have been without analogy in the world above.

Landor. His supper with Adam was unlikely to produce a surfeit.

139. *At least* our envious foe hath fail'd,

There is no meaning in *at least*: "at *last*" would be little better. I would not be captious nor irreverent; but surely the words which Milton gives as spoken by the Father to the Son bear the appearance of boastfulness and absurdity. The Son must already have known both the potency and will of the Father. How incomparably more judicious, after five terrific verses, comes at once, without any intervention,—

[216.] Silence, ye troubled waves! and thou deep, peace!

If we can imagine any thought or expression at all worthy of the Deity, we find it here. In verse 242 we have another specimen of Milton's consummate art:—

And earth, self-balanced, on her centre hung.

Unhappily, he permitted his learning to render him verbose immediately after:—

"Let there be light," said God, and forthwith light
Ethereal, first of things, quintessence pure,
Sprung from the deep.

The intermediate verse is useless and injurious; beside, according to his own account, light was not "first of things." He represents it springing from "the deep" after the earth had "hung on her centre," and long after the waters had been apparent. We do not want philosophy in the poem: we only want consistency.

Southey. There is no part of Milton's poetry where harmony is preserved, together with conciseness, so remarkably as in the verses beginning with 313, and ending at 338; but in the midst of this beautiful description of the young earth, we find

And bush with *frizzled* hair *implicit.*

But what poet or painter ever in an equal degree has raised our admiration of beasts, fowls, and fish? I know you have objected to the repetition of *shoal* in the word *scull.* [402.]

Landor. Shoal is a corruption of *scull*, which ought to be restored, serving the other with an ejectment to another place. Nor do I like *fry.* But the birds never looked so beautiful since they left Paradise. Let me read, however, three or four verses in order to offer a remark:—

[437.] Others, on silver lakes and rivers, bathed
Their downy breast: the swan with arched neck
Between her white wings mantling proudly, rows
Her state with oary feet; yet oft they quit
The dank, and rising on stiff pennons, tower, &c.

Frequently, as the great poet pauses at the ninth syllable, it is incredible that he should have done it thrice in the space of five verses. For which reason, and as nothing is to be lost by it, I would place the comma after *mantling.* No word in the whole compass of our language has been so often ill applied or misunderstood by the poet as this.

Southey.

Bk. viii., 38. Speed to describe whose swiftness number fails.

Adam could have had no notion of swiftness in the heavenly bodies or the earth: it is among the latest and most wonderful of discoveries.

Landor. Let us rise to Eve, and throw aside our algebra. The great poet is always greatest at this beatific vision. I wish,

however, he had omitted the 46th and 47th verses, and also the 60th, 61st, 62d, and 63d. There is a beautiful irregularity in the 62d,—

> And from about her shot darts of desire.

But when he adds, "Into *all* eyes," as there were but four, we must except the angel's two: the angel had no occasion for wishing to see what he was seeing.

[76.] He his fabric of the heavens
Hath left to their disputes, *perhaps to move*
His laughter.

I cannot well entertain this opinion of the Creator's risible faculties and propensities. Milton here carries his anthropomorphism much farther than the poem (which needed a good deal of it) required.

Southey. I am sorry to find a verse of twelve syllables in 216. I mean to say where no syllables coalesce; in which case there are several which contain that number unobjectionably.

Landor. In my opinion, a greater fault is to be found in the passage beginning at verse 287:—

There gentle sleep
First found me, and with soft oppression seiz'd
My drowsied sense, untroubled, though I thought
I then was passing to my former state,
Insensible, and forthwith to dissolve.

How could he think he was passing into a state of which, at that time, he knew nothing?

[Bk. ix.] 291. Daughter of God and man, immortal Eve!

Magnificent verse, and worthy of Milton in his own person: but Adam, in calling her thus, is somewhat too poetical, and too presumptuous; for what else does he call her, but "daughter of God and *me*"? Now the idea of *daughter* could never, by any possibility, have yet entered his mind.

328. *Affronts* us with his foul esteem
Of our integrity: his foul esteem
Sticks no dishonor on our front, but turns
Foul on himself;

The word *affront* is to be taken in its plain English sense, not in its Italian; but what a jingle and clash and clumsy play of words! In verse 353, I find, "But bid her well be ware;" and *be ware* is very properly in two words: so should *be gone*, and *can not*.

[Bk. viii.] 299. To the garden of bliss, thy seat prepared.

This verse is too slippery, too Italian.

403. What thinkest thou then of me and this my state?
Seem I to thee sufficiently possest
Of happiness or not, who am alone
From all eternity? for none I know
Second to me or like, equal much less.

This comes with an ill grace, after the long consultation which the Father had holden with the Son, equal (we are taught to believe) in the godhead.

Southey.

421. And through *all numbers absolute*, though one.

I wish he had had the courage to resist this pedantic, quibbling Latinism. Our language has never admitted the phrase, and never will admit it.

Landor. I have struck it out, you see, and torn the paper in doing so. In verse 576,—

Made so *adorn*, &c.

I regret that we have lost this beautiful adjective, which was well worth bringing from Italy. Here follows some very bad reasoning on love, which (being human love) the angel could know nothing about, and speaks accordingly. He adds,—

[588.] In loving thou dost well, in passion not.

Now love, to be perfect, should consist of passion and sentiment, in parts as nearly equal as possible, with somewhat of the material to second them.

Southey. We are come to the ninth book, from which I would cast away the first forty-seven verses.

Landor. Judiciously. In the 81st you will find a verb singular for two substantives, "the land where flows Ganges and Indus." The small fry will carp at this, which is often an elegance; but

oftener in Greek than in Latin, in Latin than in French, in French than in English. Here follow some of the dullest lines in Milton :—

> Him, after long debate irresolute
> Of thoughts resolved, his final sentence chose
> Fit vessel, fittest imp of fraud, in whom
> To enter, and his dark suggestion hide
> From sharpest sight: for in the wily snake
> Whatever sleights, *none* would suspicious mark,
> As from his wit and native subtilty
> Proceeding, which in other beasts observed,
> Doubt might beget of diabolic power
> Active within, beyond the sense of brute.

Not to insist on the prosaic of the passage, we may inquire who could be suspicious, or who could know any thing about his wit and subtility? He had been created but a few days; and probably no creature (brute, human, or angelic) had ever taken the least notice of him, or heard anything of his propensities. "*Diabolic* power" had taken no such direction; and the serpent was so obscure a brute that the Devil himself knew scarcely where to find him. When, however, he did find him,—

> [183.] In labyrinth of many a round self-rolled,
> His head the midst, *well stored with subtile wiles*,

—he made the most of him. But why had he hitherto borne so bad a character? Who had ever yet been a sufferer by his wit and subtilty? In the very next verses, the poet says he was—

> Not nocent yet; but on the grassy herb
> Fearless, unfear'd, he slept.

Southey. These are the contradictions of a dreamer. Horace has said of Homer, "aliquando bonus *dormitat*." This really is no napping; it is heavy snoring. But how fresh and vigorous he rises the next moment! And we are carried by him, we know not how, into the presence of Eve, and help her to hold down the strong and struggling woodbine for the arbor. I wish Milton had forgotten the manner of Euripides in his dull reflections, and had not forced into Adam's mouth,—

[232.] For nothing lovelier can be found
In woman than to *study household good*,
And good works in her husband to promote.

All this is very true, but very tedious, and very out of place.

Landor. Let us come into the open air again with her. I wish she had not confessed such a predilection for

581. The smell of sweetest *fennel;*

for, although it is said to be very pleasant to serpents, no serpent had yet communicated any of his tastes to womankind. Again, I suspect you would wish our good Milton a little farther from the schools, when he tells Eve that

[267.] The wife, where danger or dishonor lurks,
Safest and seemliest by her husband stays,
Who guards her, or with her the worst endures.

But how fully and nobly he compensates the inappropriate thought by the most appropriate!—

[278.] Just then return'd *at shut of evening flowers.*

Southey.

625. To whom the wily *adder*, blithe and glad.

I strongly object to the word *adder*, which reduces the grand serpent to very small dimensions. It never is, or has been, applied to any other species than the little ugly venomous viper of our country. Of such a reptile, it never could be said that

[631.] He . . . *swiftly* roll'd
In *tangles.*

Nor that

Hope elevates, and joy
Brightens his crest.

Here, again, Homer would have run into no such error. But error is more pardonable than wantonness, such as he commits in verse 648:—

Fruitless to me, though *fruit* be here to excess.

Landor. You have often, no doubt, repeated in writing a word you had written just before. Milton has done it inadvertently in

674. While each part,
Motion, *each* act, won audience ere the tongue, &c.

Evidently *each* should be *and.* Looking at the tempter in the shape of an *adder*, as he is last represented to us, there is something which prepares for a smile on the face of Eve, when he says,—

[687.] *Look on me,*
Me, who have touched and tasted, yet both *live*
And life more perfect have attained than fate
Meant me,

Now certainly the adder was the most hideous creature that ever had crossed her path; and she had no means of knowing, unless by taking his own word for it, that he was a bit wiser than the rest. Indeed, she had heard the voices of many long before she had heard his; and, as they all excelled him in stateliness, she might well imagine they were by no means inferior to him in intellect, and were more likely by their conformation to have reached and eaten the apple, although they held their tongues. In verse 781,—

She plucked, she *eat,*
Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her *seat,* &c.

Surely he never wrote *eat* for *ate;* nor would he admit a rhyme where he could at least palliate it. But although we met together for the purpose of plucking out the weeds and briars of this boundless and most glorious garden, and not of over-lauding the praises of others, we must admire the wonderful skill of Milton in this section of his work. He represents Eve as beginning to be deceitful and audacious; as ceasing to fear, and almost as ceasing to reverence the Creator; and shuddering not at extinction itself, until she thinks

[828.] Of Adam wedded to another Eve.

Southey. We shall lose our dinner, our supper, and our sleep,

if we expatiate on the innumerable beauties of the volume: we have scarcely time to note the blemishes. Among these,—

[853.] In her face excuse
Came prologue and apology less[7] prompt.

There is a levity and impropriety in thus rushing on the stage. I think the verses 957, 958, and 959 superfluous, and somewhat dull; beside that they are the repetition of verses 915 and 916 in his soliloquy.

Landor. I wish that after verse 1003,—

Wept at completing of the mortal sin,

—every verse were omitted, until we reach the 1121st.

They sat them down to weep.

A very natural sequence. We should indeed lose some fine poetry; in which, however, there are passages which even the sanctitude of Milton is inadequate to veil decorously. At all events, we should get fairly rid of "*Herculean* Samson." V. 1060.

Southey. But you would also lose such a flood of harmony as never ran on earth beyond that Paradise. I mean,—

[1080.] How shall I behold the face
Henceforth of God or angel, erst with joy
And rapture so oft beheld? Those heavenly shapes
Will dazzle now this earthly with their blaze,
Insufferably bright. Oh! might I here
In solitude live savage! in some glade
Obscured, where highest woods, impenetrable
To star or sunlight, spread their umbrage broad
And brown as evening. Cover me, ye pines.
Ye cedars, with innumerable boughs,
Hide me, where I may never see them more.

Landor. Certainly, when we read these verses, the ear is closed against all others, for the day, or even longer. It sometimes is a matter of amusement to hear the silliness of good men

[7 Globe ed. reads:
". . . in her face excuse
Came prologue, and apology to prompt,
Which, with bland words at will, she thus addressed."]

conversing on poetry; but when they lift up some favorite on their shoulders, and tell us to look at one equal in height to Milton, I feel strongly inclined to scourge the more prominent fool of the two, the moment I can discover which it is.

Southey.

1064. Long they sat, as *strucken mute.*

Stillingfleet says, "This vulgar expression may owe its origin to the stories in romances of the effect of the magical wand." Nothing more likely. How many modes of speech are called vulgar, in a contemptuous sense, which, because of their propriety and aptitude, strike the senses of all who hear them, and remain in the memory during the whole existence of the language! This is one, and although of daily parlance, it is highly poetical, and among the few flowers of romance that retain their freshness and odor.

Landor.

Bk. x., v. 5. For what can 'scape the eye, &c.

When we find in Milton such words as *'scape*, *'sdain*, &c., with the sign of elision in front of them, we may attribute such a sign to the wilfulness of the printer, and the indifference of the author in regard to its correction. He wrote both words without it, from the Italian *scappare* and *sdegnare.* In verse 29,—

Made haste to *make* appear,

—is negligence or worse; but incomparably worse still is,—

95. And usher in
The evening cool, when he from wrath *more cool.*

Southey. In 118, he writes *revile* (a substantive) for *rebuke.* In 130 and 131 are two verses of similar pauses in the same place:—

I should conceal, and not expose to blame
By my complaint.

The worst of it is, that the words become a verse, and a less heavy one, by tagging the two pieces together.

And not expose to blame by my complaint.

I agree with you that, in blank verse, the pause, after the fourth

syllable, which Pope and Johnson seem to like the best, is very tiresome if often repeated; and Milton seldom falls into it. But he knew where to employ it with effect: for example, in this sharp reproof, twice over. Verses 145 and 146:—

> Was she thy God, that her thou didst obey
> Before his voice?

In verse 155 he represents the Almighty using a most unseemly metaphor:—

> Which was thy part
> And person.

A metaphor taken from the masks of the ancient stage certainly ill suits "His part and person."

Landor. Here are seven (v. 175) such vile verses, and forming so vile a sentence, that it appears to me a part of God's malediction must have fallen on them on their way from *Genesis*. In 194, he says,—

> Children thou shalt bring
> In sorrow forth, and to thy husband's will
> Thine shall submit: he over thee shall rule.

The Deity had commanded the latter part from the beginning: it now comes as the completion of the curse.

Verse 198 is no verse at all.

> Because thou hast *harkened* to the voice of thy wife.

There are very few who have not done this, *bon-grè mal-grè*, and many have thought it curse enough of itself; poor Milton, no doubt, among the rest.

Southey. I suspect you will abate a little of your hilarity, if you continue to read from verse 220 about a dozen: they are most oppressive.

[266.]
> I shall not lag behind, nor err
> The way thou leading.

Such is the punctuation; wrong, I think. I would read,—

> I shall not lag behind nor err,
> The way thou leading.

Landor. He was very fond of this Latinism; but to *err a*

way is neither Latin idiom nor English. From 293 to 316, what a series of verses!—a structure more magnificent and wonderful than the terrific bridge itself, the construction of which required the united work of the two great vanquishers of all mankind.

Southey. Pity that he could not abstain from a pun at the bridge-foot, "by wondrous art *pontifical*." In verse 348 he recurs to the word *pontifice*. A few lines above, I mean verse 315, there must be a parenthesis. The verses are printed,—

> Following the track
> Of Satan to the self-same place where he
> First lighted from his wing and landed safe
> From out of chaos, to the outside bare
> Of this round world.

I would place all the words after "Satan," including *chaos*, in a parenthesis; else we must alter the second *to* for *on*; and it is safer and more reverential to correct the punctuation of a great poet than the slightest word. Bentley is much addicted to this impertinence.

Landor. In his emendations, as he calls them, both of Milton and of Horace, for one happy conjecture he makes at least twenty wrong, and ten ridiculous. In the Greek poets, and sometimes in Terence, he, beyond the rest of the pack, was often brought into the trail by scenting an unsoundness in the metre. But let me praise him where few think of praising him, or even of suspecting his superiority. He wrote better English than his adversary Middleton, and established for his university that supremacy in classical literature which it still retains.

In verse 369 I find "Thou us empower*ed*." This is ungrammatical: it should be empower*edst*, since it relates to time past. Had it related to time present, it would still be wrong: it should then be empower*est*. I wonder that Bentley has not remarked this, for it lay within his competence.

Southey. That is no reason why he omitted to remark it. I like plain English so much that I cannot refrain from censuring the phraselogy of verse 345, "With joy and tidings fraught," meaning *joyful tidings*, and defended by Virgil's *munera lætitiamque dei*. Phrases are not good, whether in Latin or English, which do not convey their meaning unbroken and unobstructed. The

best understanding would with difficulty master such expressions, of which the signification is traditional from the grammarians, but beyond the bounds of logic, or even the liberties of speech. You, who have ridiculed Virgil's *odor attulit auras*, and many similar foolish tricks committed by him, will pardon my animadversion on a smaller (though no small) fault in Milton.

Landor. Right. Again I go forward to punctuation. Bentley is puzzled again at verse 368. It is printed with the following:—

> Thou hast achieved our liberty, confined
> Within hell-gates till now; thou us empower'd
> To fortify thus far, and overlay
> With this portentous bridge, the dark abyss.

The punctuation should be,—

> Thou hast achieved our liberty: confined
> Within hell-gates till now, thou us empowerdst, &c.

I wonder that Milton should a second time have committed so grave a grammatical fault as he does in writing "thou empower*ed*," instead of empowered*st*. Verse 380,—

> Parted by the empyreal bounds,
> His *quadrature*, from thy orbicular world.

Again the schoolmen, and the crazy philosophers who followed them. It was believed that the empyrean is a quadrangle, because in the *Revelation* the Holy City is square. It is lamentable that Milton should throw overboard such prodigious stores of poetry and wisdom, and hug with such pertinacity the ill-tied bladders of crude learning. But see him here again in all his glory. I wish indeed he had rejected "the plebeian angel militant," and that we might read, missing four verses,—

[441.] He through the midst *unmarked*
Ascended his high throne.

What noble verses, fifteen together!

Southey. It is much to be regretted that most of the worst verses and much of the foulest language are put into the mouth

of the Almighty. For instance, verse 630, &c. I am afraid you will be less tolerant here than you were about the quadrature.

> My hell-hounds, to lick up the draff and filth . . .
> . . . till crammed and gorged, nigh burst . . .
> With suckt and glutted offal.

We are come

> [657.] To the other five,
> Their planetary motions and aspects,
> In sextile, square, and trine, and opposite—
>
> 693. Like change on sea and land; *sideral* blast.

Although he is partial to this scansion, I am inclined to believe that here he wrote *sidereal;* because the same scansion as *sideral* recurs in the close of the verse next but one:—

> Now *from the* north.

And, if it is not too presumptuous, I should express a doubt whether the poet wrote

> [795.] Is his wrath also? Be it: man is not so.

Not so and *also*, in this position, are disagreeable to the ear; which might have been avoided by omitting the unnecessary *so* at the close.

Landor. You are correct. "*Ay me.*" So I find it spelled (v. 813), not *ah me!* as usually. It is wonderful that, of all things borrowed, we should borrow the expression of grief. One would naturally think that every nation had its own, and indeed every man his. *Ay me!* is the *ahime* of the Italians. *Ahi lasso!* is also theirs. Our *gadso*, less poetical and sentimental, comes also from them: we need not look for the root.

Southey. Again I would curtail a long and somewhat foul excrescence, terminating with coarse invectives against the female sex, and with reflections more suitable to the character and experience of Milton than of Adam. I would insert my pruning-knife at verse 871,—

> To warn all creatures from thee—

and cut clean through, quite to "household peace confound," verse 908.

Landor. The reply of Eve is exquisitely beautiful, especially,—

[930.] Both have sinned, but thou
Against God only, I against God and thee.

At last her voice fails her,—

Me, me only, just object of his ire.

Bentley, and thousands more, would read, "Me, only me!" But Milton did not write for Bentley, nor for those thousands more. Similar, in the trepidation of grief, is Virgil's "Me, me, adsum qui feci," &c.

1003. Why stand we longer shivering under fears,
That show no end but death, and have the power
Of many ways to die the shortest choosing,
Destruction with destruction to destroy.

This punctuation is perhaps the best yet published: but, after all, it renders the sentence little better than nonsense. Eve, according to this, talks at once of hesitation and of choice, "shivering under fears," and both of them "choosing the shortest way;" yet she expostulates with Adam why he is not ready to make the choice. The perplexity would be solved by writing thus:—

Why stand we longer shivering under fears
That show no end but death? and have the power
Of many ways to die! the shortest choose—
Destruction with destruction to destroy.

If we persist in retaining the participle *choosing*, instead of the imperitive *choose*, grammar, sense, and spirit, all escape us. I am convinced that it was an oversight of the transcriber; and we know how easily, in our own works, faults to which the eye and ear are accustomed escape our detection, and we are surprised when they are first pointed out to us.

Southey. I wish you could mend as easily,—

1053. On me the curse aslope
Glanced on the ground: with labor I must earn, &c.

Landor. In the very first verse of the eleventh book, Milton is resolved to display his knowledge of the Italian idiom. We

left Adam and Eve *prostrate ;* and prostrate he means that they should still appear to us, although he writes,—

> Thus they, in loneliest plight, repentant *stood*
> Praying.

Stavano pregando would signify *they continued praying*. The Spaniards have the same expression: the French, who never stand still on any occasion, are without it.

Southey. It is piteous that Milton, in all his strength, is forced to fall back on the old fable of Deucalion and Pyrrha. And the prayers which the Son of God presents to the Father in a "golden censer, mixed with incense," had never yet been offered to the Mediator, and required no such accompaniment or conveyance. There are some noble lines beginning at verse 72; but one of them is prosaic in itself, and its discord is profitless to the others. In verse 86,—

> Of that *defended* fruit,

—I must remark that Milton is not quite exempt from the evil spirit of saying things for the mere pleasure of defending them. Chaucer used the word *defend* as the English of education then used it, in common with the French. It was obsolete in that sense when Milton wrote; so it was even in the age of Spencer, who is forced to employ it for the rhyme.

Landor. This evil spirit, which you find hanging about Milton, fell on him from two school-rooms, both of which are now become much less noisy and somewhat more instructive, although Phillpots is in the one, and although Brougham is in the other; I mean the school-rooms of theology and criticism.

Southey. You will be glad that he accents *contrite* (v. 90) on the last syllable, but the gladness will cease at the first of *rèceptacle*, verse 123.

Landor. I question whether he pronounced it so. My opinion is that he pronounced it *receptàcle*, Latinizing as usual, and especially in Book VIII., v. 565,—

> By *attributing* overmuch to things, &c.

We are strange perverters of Latin accentuations. From *irrìto* we make *ĭrrĭtate ;* from *excĭto, excìte*. But it must be con-

ceded that the latter is much for the better, and perhaps the former also. You will puzzle many good Latin scholars in England, and nearly all abroad, if you make them read any sentence containing *irrito* or *excito* in any of their tenses. I have often tried it; and nearly all, excepting the Italians, have pronounced both words wrong.

Southey.

[128.] Watchful cherubim, four faces each
Had, *like a double Janus.*

Better left this to the imagination: double Januses are queer figures. He continues,—

All their shape
Spangled with eyes, more numerous than those
Of Argus.

At the restoration of learning, it was very pardonable to seize on every remnant of antiquity, and to throw together into one great storeroom whatever could be collected from all countries, and from all authors, sacred and profane. Dante has done it, sometimes rather ludicrously. Milton here copies his *Argus.* And, four lines farther on, he brings forward *Leucothoë*, in her own person, although she had then no existence.

Landor. Nor indeed had *subscriptions*, to articles or any thing else: yet we find "but Fate *subscribed* not," v. 181. And within three more lines, "The bird of *Jove.*" Otherwise, the passage is one of exquisite beauty. Among the angels, and close at the side of the archangel, "*Iris* had dipped her woof." Verse 267, *retire* is a substantive, from the Italian and Spanish.

How divinely beautiful is the next passage! It is impossible not to apply to Milton himself the words he has attributed to Eve:—

[281.] From thee
How shall I part? and whither wander down
Into a lower world?

My ear, I confess it, is dissatisfied with every thing, for days and weeks, after the harmony of *Paradise Lost.* Leaving this magnificent temple, I am hardly to be pacified by the fairy-built

chambers, the rich cupboards of embossed plate, and the omnigenous images of Shakspeare.

Southey. I must interrupt your transports.

[385.] His *eye* might there command where ever stood
City of old or modern fame.

Here are twenty-five lines describing cities to exist long after, and many which his *eye* could not have commanded even if they existed then, because they were situated on the opposite side of the globe. But some of them, the poet reminds us afterward, Adam might have seen in spirit. Diffuse as he is, he appears quite moderate in comparison with Tasso on a similar occasion, who expatiates not only to the length of five-and-twenty lines, but to between four and five hundred.

Landor. At verse 480 there begins a catalogue of diseases, which Milton increased in the second edition of the poem. He added,—

Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
And moonstruck madness, pining atrophy,
Marasmus, and wide-wasting pestilence!

There should be no comma after "melancholy," as there is in my copy.

Southey. And in mine too. He might have afforded to strike out the two preceding verses when these noble ones were presented.

Intestine stone and ulcer, colic pangs,

are better to be understood than to be expressed. His description of old age is somewhat less sorrowful and much less repulsive. It closes with,—

[543.] In thy blood will reign
A melancholy *damp* of cold and *dry*.

Nobody could understand this who had not read the strange notions of physicians, which continued down to the age of Milton, in which we find such nonsense as "*adust* humors." I think you would be unreluctant to expunge verses 624, 625, 626, 627.

Landor. Quite: and there is also much verbiage about the giants, and very perplexed from verse 688 to 697. But some of the heaviest verses in the poem are those on Noah, from 717 to 737. In the following, we have "*vapour* and *exhalation*," which signify the same.

749. Sea covered sea,
Sea without shore.

This is very sublime; and indeed I could never heartily join with those who condemn in Ovid

Omnia pontus erant; deerant quoque litora ponto.

It is true, the whole fact is stated in the first hemistich; but the mind's eye moves from the centre to the circumference, and the pleonasm carries it into infinity. If there is any fault in this passage of Ovid, Milton has avoided it; but he frequently falls into one vastly more than Ovidian, and after so awful a pause as is nowhere else in all the regions of poetry:—

How didst thou grieve then, Adam, to behold
The end of all thy offspring! end so sad!
Depopulation!
Thee another flood,
Of tears and sorrow a flood, thee also drowned,
And sank thee as thy sons.

It is wonderful how little reflection on many occasions, and how little knowledge on some very obvious ones, is displayed by Bentley. To pass over his impudence in pretending to correct the words of Milton (whose handwriting was extant), just as he would the corroded or corrupt text of any ancient author, here in verse 895, "To drown the world with man therein, or *beast*," he tells us that *birds are forgot*, and would substitute "With man or beast or *fowl*." He might as well have said that *fleas* are *forgot*. Beast means every thing that is not man. It would be much more sensible to object to such an expression as *men and animals*, and to ask, Are not men animals? and even more so than the rest, if *anima* has with men a more extensive meaning than with other creatures. Bentley in many things was very acute; but his criticisms on poetry produce the same effect as the water of a lead mine on plants. He knew no more about it than Hallam

knows, in whom acuteness is certainly not blunted by such a weight of learning.

Southey. We open the twelfth book: we see land at last.

Landor. Yes, and dry land too. Happily the twelfth is the shortest. In a continuation of six hundred and twenty-five flat verses, we are prepared for our passage over several such deserts of almost equal extent, and still more frequent, in *Paradise Regained.* But, at the close of the poem now under our examination, there is a brief union of the sublime and the pathetic for about twenty lines, beginning with "All in bright array."

We are comforted by the thought that Providence had not abandoned our first parents, but was still their guide; that, although they had lost Paradise, they were not debarred from Eden; that, although the angel had left them solitary and sorrowing, he left them "yet in peace." The termination is proper and complete.

In Johnson's estimate I do not perceive the unfairness of which many have complained. Among his first observations is this: "Scarcely any recital is wished shorter for the sake of quickening the main action." This is untrue: were it true, why remark, as he does subsequently, that the poem is mostly read as a duty, not as a pleasure. I think it unnecessary to say a word on the moral or the subject; for it requires no genius to select a grand one. The heaviest poems may be appended to the loftiest themes. Andreini and others, whom Milton turned over and tossed aside, are evidences. It requires a large stock of patience to travel through Vida; and we slacken in our march, although accompanied with the livelier sing-song of Sannazar. Let any reader, who is not by many degrees more pious than poetical, be asked whether he felt a very great interest in the greatest actors of *Paradise Lost*, in what is either said or done by the angels or the Creator; and whether the humblest and weakest does not most attract him. Johnson's remarks on the allegory of Milton are just and wise; so are those on the non-materiality or non-immateriality of Satan. These faults might have been easily avoided; but Milton, with all his strength, chose rather to make antiquity his shield-bearer, and to come forward under a protection which he might proudly have disdained.

Southey. You will not countenance the critic, nor Dryden

whom he quotes, in saying that Milton "saw Nature through the spectacles of books."

Landor. Unhappily, both he and Dryden saw Nature from between the houses of Fleet Street. If ever there was a poet who knew her well, and described her in all her loveliness, it was Milton. In the *Paradise Lost*, how profuse in his descriptions, as became the time and place! In the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, how exquisite and select!

Johnson asks, "What Englishman can take delight in transcribing passages, which, if they lessen the reputation of Milton, diminish in some degree the honor of our country!" I hope the honor of our country will always rest on truth and justice. It is not by concealing what is wrong that any thing right can be accomplished. There is no pleasure in transcribing such passages; but there is great utility. Inferior writers exercise no interest, attract no notice, and serve no purpose. Johnson has himself done great good by exposing great faults in great authors. His criticism on Milton's highest work is the most valuable of all his writings. He seldom is erroneous in his censures; but he never is sufficiently excited to admiration of what is purest and highest in poetry. He has this in common with common minds (from which, however, his own is otherwise far remote), to be pleased with what is nearly on a level with him, and to drink as contentedly a heady beverage, with its discolored froth, as what is of the best vintage. He is morbid, not only in his weakness, but in his strength. There is much to pardon, much to pity, much to respect, and no little to admire, in him.

After I have been reading the *Paradise Lost*, I can take up no other poet with satisfaction. I seem to have left the music of Handel for the music of the streets, or at best for drums and fifes. Although in Shakspeare there are occasional bursts of harmony no less sublime; yet, if there were many such in continuation, it would be hurtful, not only in comedy, but also in tragedy. The greater part should be equable and conversational. For, if the excitement were the same at the beginning, the middle, and the end; if, consequently (as must be the case), the language and versification were equally elevated throughout,—any long poem would be a bad one, and, worst of

all, a drama. In our English heroic verse, such as Milton has composed it, there is a much greater variety of feet, of movement, of musical notes and bars, than in the Greek heroic; and the final sounds are incomparably more diversified. My predilection in youth was on the side of Homer; for I had read the *Iliad* twice, and the *Odyssea* once, before the *Paradise Lost*. Averse as I am to every thing relating to theology, and especially to the view of it thrown open by this poem, I recur to it incessantly as the noblest specimen in the world of eloquence, harmony, and genius.

Southey. Learned and sensible men are of opinion that the *Paradise Lost* should have ended with the words, "Providence their guide." It might very well have ended there; but we are unwilling to lose sight all at once of our first parents. Only one more glimpse is allowed us: we are thankful for it. We have seen the natural tears they dropped; we have seen that they wiped them *soon*. And why was it? Not because the world was all before them; but because there still remained for them, under the guidance of Providence, not indeed the delights of Paradise, now lost for ever, but the genial clime and calm repose of Eden.

Landor. It has been the practice in late years to supplant one dynasty by another, political and poetical. Within our own memory, no man had ever existed who preferred Lucretius on the whole to Virgil, or Dante to Homer. But the great Florentine, in these days, is extolled high above the Grecian and Milton. Few, I believe, have studied him more attentively or with more delight than I have; but, beside the prodigious disproportion of the bad to the good, there are fundamental defects which there are not in either of the other two. In the *Divina Commedia* the characters are without any bond of union, any field of action, any definite aim. There is no central light above the Bolge; and we are chilled in Paradise even at the side of Beatrice.

Southey. Some poetical Perillus must surely have invented the *terza rima*. I feel in reading it as a school-boy feels when he is beaten over the head with a bolster.

Landor. We shall hardly be in time for dinner. What should we have been if we had repeated with just eulogies all the noble things in the poem we have been reading?

Southey. They would never have weaned you from the *Mighty Mother* who placed her turreted crown on the head of Shakspeare.

Landor. A rib of Shakspeare would have made a Milton; the same portion of Milton, all poets born ever since.

SECOND CONVERSATION.[1]

Southey. As we are walking on, and before we open our Milton again, we may digress a little in the direction of those poets who have risen up from under him, and of several who seem to have never had him in sight.

Landor. We will, if you please; and I hope you may not find me impatient to attain the object of our walk. However, let me confess to you, at starting, that I disapprove of models, even of the most excellent. Faults may be avoided, especially if they are pointed out to the inexperienced in such bright examples as Milton; and teachers in schools and colleges would do well to bring them forward, instead of inculcating an indiscriminate admiration. But every man's mind, if there is enough of it, has its peculiar bent. Milton may be imitated, and has been, where he is stiff, where he is inverted, where he is pedantic; and probably those men we take for mockers were unconscious of their mockery. But who can teach, or who is to be taught, his richness, or his tenderness, or his strength? The closer an inferior poet comes to a great model, the more disposed am I to sweep him out of my way.

Southey. Yet you repeat with enthusiasm the Latin poetry of Robert Smith, an imitator of Lucretius.

Landor. I do; for Lucretius himself has nowhere written such a continuity of admirable poetry. He is the only modern Latin poet who has composed three sentences together worth reading; and, indeed, since Ovid, no ancient has done it. I ought to bear great ill-will toward him; for he drove me from the path of poetry I had chosen, and I crept into a lower. What

[1] Works, ii., 1846. Works, iv., 1876.]

a wonderful thing it is, that the most exuberant and brilliant wit, and the purest poetry in the course of eighteen centuries, should have flowed from two brothers!

Southey. We must see through many ages before we see through our own distinctly. Few among the best judges, and even among those who desired to judge dispassionately and impartially, have beheld their contemporaries in those proportions in which they appeared a century later. The ancients have greatly the advantage over us. Scarcely can any man believe that one whom he has seen in coat and cravat can possibly be so great as one who wore a chlamys and a toga. Those alone look gigantic whom Time "*multo aëre sepsit*," or whom childish minds, for the amusement of other minds more childish, have lifted upon stilts. Nothing is thought so rash as to mention a modern with an ancient; but, when both are ancient, the last-comer often stands first. The present form one cluster, the past another. We are petulant if some of the existing have pushed by too near us; but we walk up composedly to the past, with all our prejudices behind us. We compare them leisurely one with another, and feel a pleasure in contributing to render them a plenary, however a tardy, justice. In the fervor of our zeal, we often exceed it; which we never are found doing with our contemporaries, unless in malice to one better than the rest. Some of our popular and most celebrated authors are employed by the booksellers to cry up the wares on hand or forthcoming, partly for money and partly for payment in kind. Without such management, the best literary production is liable to moulder on the shelf.

Landor. A wealthy man builds an ample mansion, well proportioned in all its parts, well stored with the noblest models of antiquity; extensive vales and downs and forests stretch away from it in every direction; but the stranger must of necessity pass it by, unless a dependent is stationed at a convenient lodge to admit and show him in. Such, you have given me to understand, is become the state of our literature. The bustlers who rise into notice by playing at leap frog over one another's shoulders will disappear when the game is over; and no game is shorter. But was not Milton himself kept beyond the paling? Nevertheless, how many *toupees* and *roquelaures*, and other odd things with odd names, have fluttered among the jays in the cherry orchard, while

we tremble to touch with the finger's end his grave, close-buttoned gabardine! He was called strange and singular long before he was acknowledged to be great: so, be sure, was Shakspeare; so, be sure, was Bacon; and so were all the rest, in the order of descent. You are too generous to regret that your liberal praise of Wordsworth was seized upon with avidity by his admirers, not only to win others to their party, but also to depress your merits. Nor will you triumph over their folly in confounding what is pitiful with what is admirable in him; rather will you smile, and, without a suspicion of malice, find the cleverest of these good people standing on his low joint-stool with a slender piece of wavering tape in his hand, measuring him with Milton back to back. There is as much difference between them as there is between a celandine and an ilex. The one lies at full length and full breadth along the ground; the other rises up, stiff, strong, lofty, beautiful in the play of its slenderer branches, overshadowing with the infinitude of its grandeur.

Southey. You will be called to account as resentful; and not for yourself, which you never have been thought, but for another, —a graver fault in the estimation of most.

Landor. I do not remember that resentment has ever made me commit an injustice. Instead of acrimony, it usually takes the form of ridicule; and the sun absorbs whatever is noxious in the vapor.

Southey. You think me mild and patient; yet I have found it difficult to disengage from my teeth the clammy and bitter heaviness of some rotten nuts with which my Edinburgh hosts have regaled me; and you little know how tiresome it is to wheeze over the chaff and thistle-beards in the chinky manger of Hallam.[2]

Landor. We are excellent Protestants in asserting the liberty of private judgment on all the mysteries of poetry; denying the exercise of a decretal to any one man, however intelligent and

[2 There are several attacks upon Hallam in this Conversation. Landor appears to have had two reasons for disliking him. In the first place, he always ascribed to Hallam an unfavourable review of the Pentameron which appeared in the *Foreign Quarterly*; moreover, Landor had met Hallam at Sir Charles Elton's, and had been snubbed by him. (See Forster's Life, p. 204.]

enlightened, but assuming it for a little party of our own, with *Self* in the chair. A journalist who can trip up a slippery minister fancies himself able to pull down the loftiest poet or the soundest critic. It is amusing to see the labors of Lilliput.

Southey. I have tasted the contents of every bin, down to the ginger-beer of Brougham. The balance of criticism is not yet fixed to any beam in the public warehouses that offer it, but is held unevenly by intemperate hands, and is swayed about by every puff of wind.

Landor. Authors should never be seen by authors, and little by other people. The Dalai Lama is a god to the imagination, a child to the sight; and a poet is much the same; only that the child excites no vehemence, while the poet is staked and faggoted by his surrounding brethren,—all from pure love, however; partly for himself, partly for truth. When it was a matter of wonder how Keats, who was ignorant of Greek, could have written his Hyperion, Shelley, whom envy never touched, gave as a reason, "Because he *was* a Greek." Wordsworth, being asked his opinion of the same poem, called it, scoffingly, "a pretty piece of paganism." Yet he himself, in the best verses he ever wrote, and beautiful ones they are, reverts to the powerful influence of the pagan creed.

Southey. How many who write fiercely or contemptuously against us, not knowing us at all, would, if some accident or whim had never pushed them in the wrong direction, write with as much satisfaction to themselves a sonnet full of tears and tenderness on our death! In the long voyage we both of us may soon expect to make, the little shell-fish will stick to our keels, and retard us one knot in the thousand. But while we are here, let us step aside, and stand close by the walls of the old houses; making room for the swell-mob of authors to pass by, with their puffiness of phraseology, their german-silver ornaments, their bossy and ill-soldered sentences, their little and light parlor-faggots of trim philosophy, and their top-heavy baskets of false language, false criticism, and false morals.

Landor. Our sinews have been scarred and hardened with the red-hot implements of Byron; and, by way of refreshment, we are now standing up to the middle in the marsh. We are told that the highly-seasoned is unwholesome; and we have taken in

good earnest to clammy rye-bread, boiled turnips, and scrag of mutton. If there is nobody who now can guide us through the glades in the Forest of Arden, let us hail the first who will conduct us safely to the gates of Ludlow Castle. But we have other reasons left on hand. For going through the *Paradise Regained*, how many days' indulgence will you grant me?

Southey. There are some beautiful passages, as you know, although not numerous. As the poem is much shorter than the other, I will spare you the annoyance of uncovering its nakedness. I remember to have heard you say that your ear would be better pleased, and your understanding equally, if there had been a pause at the close of the fourth verse.

Landor. True; the three following are useless and heavy. I would also make another defalcation, of the five after "else mute." If the deeds he relates are

> Above heroic, *though in secret done*,

it was unnecessary to say that they are

> Worthy to have not remained so long unsung.

Southey. Satan, in his speech, seems to have caught hoarseness and rheumatism since we met him last. What a verse is,—

> [85.] This is my Son beloved, in him, *am* pleased!

It would not have injured it to have made it English, by writing "in him I am pleased." It would only have continued a sadly dull one.

> [118.] Of many a pleasant realm—*and province wide*,

> [139.] The Holy Ghost, and the power of the Highest.

But this is hardly more prosaic than, "Oh,[3] what a multitude of thoughts, at once awakened in me, swarm, while I consider what within I feel myself, and hear!" &c. But the passage has reference to the poet, and soon becomes very interesting on that account.

> [175.] But to vanquish by wisdom hellish wiles.

[3 Line 195. Globe ed.]

It is difficult so to modulate our English verse as to render this endurable to the ear. The first line in the *Gerusalemme Liberata* begins with a double trochee, *Canto l'arme*. The word "*But*" is too feeble for the trochee to turn on. We come presently to such verses as we shall never see again out of this poem:—

[299.] And he still on was led, but with such thoughts
Accompanied, of things past and to come,
Lodged in his breast, *as well might recommend*
Such solitude before choicest society.

[360.] But was driven
With them from bliss to the bottomless deep.

This is dactylic.

With them from | bliss to the bottomless | deep.

412. He before had sat
Among the prime in splendor, now deposed,
Ejected, *emptied*, gazed, unpitied, shunn'd,
A spectacle of ruin *or* of scorn, &c.

Or should be *and*.

[436.] Which they who ask'd have seldom *understood*,
And, not well *understood*, as *good* not known.

To avoid the jingle, which perhaps he preferred, he might have written "*as well;*" but how prosaic!

Landor. The only tolerable part of the first book are the six closing lines; and these are the more acceptable because they are the closing ones.

Southey. The second book opens inauspiciously. The Devil himself was never so unlike the Devil as these verses are unlike verses:—

[7.] Andrew and Simon, *famous after known*,
With others though in holy writ not named,
Now missing him, &c.
[27.] Plain fishermen, no greater men *them call*.

Landor. I do not believe that any thing short of your friendship would induce me to read a third time, during my life, the *Paradise Regained;* and I now feel my misfortune and imprudence in having given to various friends this poem and many

others, in which I have marked with a pencil the faults and beauties. The dead level lay wide and without a finger-post; the highest objects appeared, with few exceptions, no higher or ornamental than bulrushes. We shall spend but little time in repeating all the passages where they occur; and it will be a great relief to us. Invention, energy, and grandeur of design—the three great requisites to constitute a great poet, and which no poet since Milton hath united—are wanting here. Call the design a grand one, if you will; you cannot, however, call it his. Wherever there are thought, imagination, and energy, grace invariably follows; otherwise the colossus would be without its radiance, and we should sail by with wonder and astonishment, and gather no roses and gaze at no images on the sunny isle.

Southey. Shakspeare, whom you not only prefer to every other poet, but think he contains more poetry and more wisdom than all the rest united, is surely less grand in his designs than several.

Landor. To the eye. But *Othello* was loftier than the citadel of Troy; and what a Paradise fell before him! Let us descend; for from *Othello* we *must* descend, whatever road we take. Let us look at *Julius Cæsar.* No man ever overcame such difficulties, or produced by his life and death such a change in the world we inhabit. But that also is a grand design which displays the interior workings of the world within us, and where we see the imperishable and unalterable passions depicted *al fresco* on a lofty dome. Our other dramatists painted only on the shambles, and represented what they found there,—blood and garbage. We leave them a few paces behind us, and step over the gutter into the green-market. There are, however, men rising up among us, endowed with exquisiteness of taste and intensity of thought. At no time have there been so many who write well in so many ways.

Southey. Have you taken breath; and are you ready to go on with me?

Landor. More than ready,—alert. For we see before us a longer continuation of good poetry than we shall find again throughout the whole poem, beginning at verse 153, and terminating at 224. In these, however, there are some bad verses, such as,—

[153.] Among daughters of men the fairest found,

[171.] And made him bow to the gods of his wives.

Verse 180,—

Cast wanton eyes on the daughters of men,

—is false grammar: "thou *cast*," for, "thou *castedst*." I find the same fault where I am as much surprised to find it, in Shelley:—

Thou lovest, but ne'er *knew* love's sad satiety.

Shelley in his *Cenci* has overcome the greatest difficulty that ever was overcome in poetry, although he has not risen to the greatest elevation. He possesses less vigor than Byron, and less command of language than Keats; but I would rather have written his

"Music, when soft voices die,"

than all that Beaumont and Fletcher ever wrote, together with all of their contemporaries, excepting Shakspeare.

Southey. It is wonderful that Milton should praise the continence of Alexander as well as of Scipio. Few conquerors had leisure for more excesses, or indulged in greater, than Alexander. He was reserved on one remarkable occasion: we hear of only one. Scipio, a much better man, and temperate in all things, would have been detested, even in Rome, if he had committed that crime from which the forbearance is foolishly celebrated as his chief virtue.

You will not refuse your approbation to another long passage, beginning at verse 260, and ending at 300. But at the conclusion of them, where the Devil says that "beauty [4] stands in the admiration only of weak minds," he savors a little of the Puritan. Milton was sometimes angry with her; but never had she a more devoted or a more discerning admirer. For these forty good verses, you will pardon,—

[243.] After forty days' fasting *had remained.*

[4 "For beauty stands in the admiration only of weak minds led captive," is line 220. The passage, at whose conclusion it comes, must be that praised by Landor above, and not the passage which Southey here commends. There is some confusion in the passage as it now stands.]

Landor. Very much like the progress of Milton himself in this *jejunery*. I remember your description of the cookery in Portugal and Spain, which my own experience most bitterly confirmed; but I never met with a *bonito* "gris-amber-steamed."[5] This certainly was reserved for the Devil's own cookery. Our Saviour, I think, might have fasted another forty days before he could have stomached this dainty; and the Devil, if he had had his wits about him, might have known as much.

Southey. I have a verse in readiness which may serve as a napkin to it:—

[405.] And with these words his temptation pursued;

where it would have been very easy to have rendered it less disagreeable to the ear by a transposition,—

And his temptation with these words pursued.

I am afraid you will object to a redundant heaviness in—

[427.] Get *riches* first—get *wealth*—and *treasure heap*;

and no authority will reconcile you to roll-calls of proper names, such as—

[361.] Launcelot or Pellias or Pellenore;

and—

[446.] Quintius, Fabricius, Curius, Regulus;

or, again, to such a verse as—

[428.] Not difficult, if thou hearken to me.

Verse 461,—

To him who wears the regal diadem,

—is quite superfluous, and adds nothing to the harmony. Verses 472-476 have the same cesura. This, I believe, has never been

[5 Line 342 (Globe ed.).

"beasts of chase or fowl of game
In pastry built or from the spit or boiled
Gris-amber steamed."

There is no *bonito* in Milton.]

remarked, and yet is the most remarkable thing in all Milton's poetry.

It is wonderful that any critic should be so stupid, as a dozen or two of them have proved themselves to be, in applying the last verses of this second book to Christina of Sweden :—

> To *give* a kingdom hath been thought
> Greater and nobler done, and to lay down
> Far more magnanimous than to assume.
> *Riches* are needless then, &c.

Whether he had written this before or after the abdication of Richard Cromwell, they are equally applicable to him. He did retire not only from sovereignty but from riches. Christina took with her to Rome prodigious wealth, and impoverished Sweden by the pension she exacted.

The last lines are intolerably harsh :—

> *Oftest* better *miss'd,*

It may have been written "often :" a great relief to the ear, and no detriment to the sense or expression. We never noticed his care in avoiding such a ruggedness in verse 401,—

> Whose pains have earn'd the *far-fet* spoil.

He employed "far-*fet*" instead of "far-*fetch'd ;*" not only because the latter is in conversational use, but because no sound is harsher than "*fetch'd,*" and especially before two sequent consonants, followed by such words as "*with that.*" It is curious that he did not prefer "*wherewith ;*" both because a verse ending in "*that*" is followed by one ending in "*quite,*" and because "*that*" also begins the next. I doubt whether you will be satisfied with the first verse I have marked in the third book,—

[217.] From that placid aspéct and meek regard.

Landor. The trochee in "*placid*" is feeble there, and "*meek regard*" conveys no new idea to "*placid aspéct.*" Presently we come to—

[335.] Mules after these, camels and dromedaries,
And wagons fraught with utensils of war.

And here, if you could find any pleasure in a triumph over the petulance and frowardness of a weak adversary, you might laugh at poor Hallam, who cites the following as among the noble passages of Milton :—

[337.] Such forces met not, *nor so wide a camp*,
When Agrican with all his northern powers
Besieged Albracca, *as romances tell*,
The city of Gallafron, from whence to win
The fairest of her sex, *Angelica*.

Southey. How very like Addison when his milk was turned to whey! I wish I could believe that the applauders of this poem were sincere, since it is impossible to think them judicious; their quotations, and especially Hallam's, having been selected from several of the weakest parts when better were close before them: but we have strong evidence that the opinion was given in the spirit of contradiction, and from the habit of hostility to what is eminent. I would be charitable. Hallam may have hit upon the place by hazard; he may have been in the situation of a young candidate for preferment in the church, who was recommended to the Chancellor Thurlow. After much contemptuousness and ferocity, the chancellor, throwing open on the table his *Book of Livings*, commanded him to choose for himself. The young man modestly and timidly thanked him for his goodness, and entreated his lordship to exercise his own discretion. With a volley of oaths, of which he was at all times prodigal, but more especially in the presence of a clergyman, he cried aloud, "Put this pen, sir, at the side of one or other." Hesitation was now impossible. The candidate placed it without looking where: it happened to be at a benefice of small value. Thurlow slapped his hand upon the table, and roared, "By God! you were within an ace of the best living in my gift!"

Landor. Hear the end :—

His daughter, sought by many prowest knights,
Both Paynim and the peers of Charlemagne.

Southey. It would be difficult to extract, even from this poem, so many schoolboy's verses together. The preceding,

which also are verbose, are much more spirited; and the illustration of one force by the display of another, and which the poet tells us is less, exhibits but small discrimination in the critic who extols it. To praise a fault is worse than to commit one. I know not whether any such critic has pointed out for admiration the "*glass of telescope*," by which the Tempter might have shown Rome to our Saviour, verse 42, Book IV. But we must not pass over lines nearer the commencement, verse 10:—

> But as a man who had been matchless held
> In cunning, *over-reach'd* where least he thought,
> To salve his credit, and for very spite
> Still will be tempting him who foils him still.

This is no simile, no illustration; but exactly what Satan had been doing.

Landor. The Devil grows very dry in the desert, where he discourses—

[278.] Of Academics old and new, with those
Surnamed Peripatetics, and the sect
Epicurean, and the Stoic severe.

Southey. It is piteous to find the simplicity of the gospel overlaid and deformed by the scholastic argumentation of our Saviour, and by the pleasure he appears to take in holding a long conversation with the adversary:—

> Not therefore am I *short*
> Of knowing what I *ought*. He who receives
> Light from above, from the fountain of light.

What a verse, verse 287, &c.! A dissertation from our Saviour, delivered to the Devil in the manner our poet has delivered it, was the only thing wanting to his punishment; and he catches it at last. Verse 397:—

> Darkness now *rose*
> As daylight sunk, and brought in *lowering* night,
> Her shadowy offspring.

This is equally bad poetry and bad philosophy: the darkness *rising* and bringing in the night *lowering*; when he adds,—

Unsubstantial both,
Privation mere of light—*and absent day.*

How? Privation of its absence! He wipes away with a single stroke of the brush two very indistinct and ill-drawn figures.

Landor.

Our Saviour meek and with *untroubled* mind,
After his airy *jaunt*, tho' *hurried sore.*

How "*hurried* sore," if with *untroubled* mind?

Hungry and cold, betook him to his rest.

I should have been quite satisfied with a quarter of this.

Darkness now rose;
Our Saviour meek betook him to his rest.

Such simplicity would be the more grateful and the more effective in preceding that part of *Paradise Regained* which is the most sublimely pathetic. It would be idle to remark the propriety of accentuation of *concoùrse*, and almost as idle to notice that in verse 420 is—

Thou only *stoodst* unshaken;

and in verse 425,—

Thou *satst* unappalled.

But to *stand*, as I said before, is to *remain*, or to *be*, in Milton, following the Italian. Never was the eloquence of poetry so set forth by words and numbers in any language as in this period. Pardon the *infernal* and *hellish*.

Infernal ghosts and hellish furies round
Environ'd thee: some howl'd, some yell'd, some shriekt,
Some bent at thee their fiery darts, *while thou*
Satst unappalled in calm and sinless peace.

The idea of *sitting* is in itself more beautiful than of standing or lying down; but our Saviour is represented as lying down, while,—

The tempter watcht, and soon with ugly dreams
Disturbed his sleep.

He could disturb but not appall him, as he himself says in verse 487.

Southey. It is thought by Joseph Warton and some others, that, where the Devil says,—

[500.] Then hear, O Son of David, virgin-born,
For Son of God to me is yet in doubt, &c.,

—he speaks sarcastically in the word *virgin*-born. But the Devil is not so bad a rhetorician as to turn round so suddenly from the ironical to the serious. He acknowledges the miracle of the nativity; he pretends to doubt its divinity.

[541.] So saying he caught him up, and *without wing*
Of hippogrif, bore through the air sublime.

Satan had given good proof that his wing was more than a match for a hippogrif's; and, if he had borrowed a hippogrif's for the occasion, he could have made no use of it, unless he had borrowed the hippogrif too, and rode before or behind on him,—

Over the wilderness—and *o'er* the plain.

Two better verses follow; but the temple of Jerusalem could never have appeared,—

Topt with golden *spires*,

[581.] So Satan fell; and straight a fiery globe
Of angels on full sail of wing flew nigh,
Who on their plumy vans received *him soft*.

He means our Saviour, not Satan. In any ancient we should manage a little the *ductus literarum*, and for the wretched words, "*him soft*," propose to substitute *their lord*. But by what ingenuity can we erect into a verse verse 597?

In the bosom of bliss and light of light.

In verses 613 and 614 we find rhyme.

Landor. The angels seem to have lost their voices since they left Paradise. Their denunciations against Satan are very angry, but very weak:—

[629.] Thee and thy legions; yelling they shall fly
And beg to hide them in a herd of swine,
Lest he command them down into the deep,
Bound, and to torment sent before their time.

Surely they had been tormented long before.

The close of the poem is extremely languid, however much it has been commended for its simplicity.

Southey.

He, unobserved,
Home, to his *mother's* house, *private* return'd.

Unobserved and *private; home* and his "*mother's house*," are not very distinctive.

Landor. Milton took but little time in forming the plan of his *Paradise Regained*, doubtful and hesitating as he had been in the construction of *Paradise Lost*. In composing a poem or any other work of imagination, although it may be well and proper to lay down a plan, I doubt whether any author of any durable work has confined himself to it very strictly. But writers will no more tell you whether they do or not than they will bring out before you the foul copies, or than painters will admit you into the secret of composing or of laying on their colors. I confess to you, that a few detached thoughts and images have always been the beginnings of my works. Narrow slips have risen up, more or fewer, above the surface. These gradually became larger and more consolidated; freshness and verdure first covered one part, then another; then plants of firmer and of higher growth, however scantily, took their places, then extended their roots and branches; and among them and round about them in a little while you yourself, and as many more as I desired, found places for study and for recreation.

Returning to *Paradise Regained*. If a loop in the netting of a purse is let down, it loses the money that is in it; so a poem by laxity drops the weight of its contents. In the animal body, not only nerves and juices are necessary, but also continuity and cohesion. Milton is caught sleeping after his exertions in *Paradise Lost*, and the lock of his strength is shorn off; but here and there a prominent muscle swells out from the vast mass of the collapsed.

Southey. The *Samson Agonistes*, now before us, is less lan-

guid; but it may be charged with almost the heaviest fault of a poem, or indeed of any composition, particularly the dramatic, which is, there is insufficient coherency or dependence of part on part. Let us not complain that, while we look at Samson and hear his voice, we are forced to think of Milton, of his blindness, of his abandonment, with as deep a commiseration. If we lay open the few faults covered by his transcendent excellences, we feel confident that none are more willing (or would be more acceptable were he present) to pay him homage. I retain all my admiration of his poetry; you all yours, not only of his poetry, but of his sentiments on many grave subjects.

Landor. I do; but I should be reluctant to see disturbed the order and course of things, by alterations at present unnecessary, or by attempts at what might be impracticable. When an evil can no longer be borne manfully and honestly and decorously, then down with it, and put something better in its place. Meanwhile guard strenuously against such evil. The vigilant will seldom be constrained to vengeance.

Southey. Simple as is the plan of this drama, there are prettinesses in it which would be far from ornamental anywhere. Milton is much more exuberant in them than Ovid himself, who certainly would never have been so commended by Quintilian for the *Media*, had he written—

7. Where I, a prisoner chain'd, scarce freely draw
The air imprisoned also.

But into what sublimity he soon ascends!

[40.] Ask for this great deliverer now, and find him
Eyeless in Gaza at the mill with slaves.

Landor. My copy is printed as you read it; but there ought to be commas after *eyeless*, after *Gaza*, and after *mill*. Generally our printers or writers put three commas where one would do; but here the grief of Samson is aggravated at every member of the sentence. Surely it must have been the resolution of Milton to render his choruses as inharmonious as he fancied the Greek were, or would be, without the accompaniments of instruments, accentuation, and chants. Otherwise, how can we account for "abandoned,[6] and by *himself given over; in slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds*,

[6] Line 120. Globe ed.]

over-worn and soiled. Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he, that heroic, that renowned, irresistible Samson?"

Southey. We are soon compensated, regretting only that the *chorus* talks of "*Chalybean* tempered steel" in the beginning, and then informs us of his exploit with the jaw-bone,—

[145.] In Ramath-lehi, *famous to this day.*

It would be strange indeed if such a victory as was never won before were forgotten in twenty years, or thereabout.

Southey. Passing Milton's oversights, we next notice his systematic defects. Fondness for Euripides made him too didactic when action was required. Perhaps the French drama kept him in countenance, although he seems to have paid little attention to it, comparatively.

Landor. The French drama contains some of the finest didactic poetry in the world, and is peculiarly adapted both to direct the reason and to control the passions. It is a well-lighted saloon of graceful eloquence, where the sword-knot is appended by the hand of Beauty, and where the snuff-box is composed of such brilliants as, after a peace or treaty, kings bestow on diplomatists. Whenever I read a French Alexdrine, I fancy I receive a box on the ear in the middle of it, and another at the end, sufficient, if not to pain, to weary me intolerably, and to make the book drop out of my hand. Molière and La Fontaine can alone by their homœopathy revive me. Such is the power of united wit and wisdom in ages the most desperate! These men, with Montaigne and Charron, will survive existing customs, and probably existing creeds. Millions will be captivated by them, when the eloquence of Bossuet himself shall interest extremely few. Yet the charms of language are less liable to be dissipated by time than the sentences of wisdom. While the incondite volumes of more profound philosophers are no longer in existence, scarcely one of writers who enjoyed in a high degree the gift of eloquence is altogether lost. Among the Athenians there are indeed some; but in general they were worthless men, squabbling on worthless matters: we have little to regret, excepting of Phocion and of Pericles. If we turn to Rome, we retain all the best of Cicero; and we patiently and almost indifferently hear that nothing is to be found of Marcus Antonius or

Hortensius; for the eloquence of the bar is and ought always to be secondary.

Southey. You were remarking that our poet paid little attention to the French drama. Indeed, in his preface he takes no notice of it whatsoever,—not even as regards the plot, in which consists its chief excellence, or perhaps I should say rather its superiority. He holds the opinion that "A plot, whether intricate or explicit, is nothing but such economy or disposition of the fable as may stand best with verisimilitude and decorum." Surely, the French tragedians have observed this doctrine attentively.

Landor. It has rarely happened that dramatic events have followed one another in their natural order. The most remarkable instance of it is in the *King Œdipus* of Sophocles. But Racine is in general the most skilful of the tragedians, with little energy and less invention. I wish Milton had abstained from calling "Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides the three tragic poets unequalled *yet* by any;" because it may leave a suspicion that he fancied he, essentially undramatic, could equal them, and had now done it; and because it exhibits him as a detractor from Shakspeare. I am as sorry to find him in this condition as I should have been to find him in a fit of the gout, or treading on a nail with naked foot in his blindness.

Southey. Unfortunately, it is impossible to exculpate him; for you must have remarked where, a few sentences above, are these expressions: "This is mentioned to vindicate from the *small esteem or rather infamy* which in the account of many it undergoes at this day, with other common interludes; happening through the poet's error of intermixing *comick stuff with tragick sadness and gravity*, or intermixing trivial and vulgar persons, which, by all judicious, hath been counted absurd, and brought in without discretion, corruptly to gratify the people."

Landor. It may be questioned whether the people in the reign of Elizabeth, or indeed the queen herself, would have been contented with a drama without a smack of the indecent or the ludicrous. They had alike been accustomed to scenes of ribaldry and of bloodshed; and the palace opened on one wing to the brothel, on the other to the shambles. The clowns of Shakspeare are still admired by not the vulgar only.

Southey. The more the pity. Let them appear in their proper places. But a picture by Morland or Frank Hals ought never to break a series of frescoes by the hand of Raphael, or of senatorial portraits animated by the sun of Titian. There is much to be regretted in, and (since we are alone I will say it) a little which might without loss or injury be rejected from, the treasury of Shakspeare.

Landor. It is difficult to sweep away any thing and not to sweep away gold-dust with it: but viler dust lies thick in some places. The grave Milton, too, has cobwebs hanging on his workshop, which a high broom, in a steady hand, may reach without doing mischief. But let children and short men, and unwary ones, stand out of the way.

Southey. Necessary warning! for nothing else occasions so general satisfaction as the triumph of a weak mind over a stronger. And this often happens; for the sutures of a giant's armor are most penetrable from below. Surely no poet is so deeply pathetic as the one before us, and nowhere more than in those verses which begin at the sixtieth and end with the eighty-fifth. There is much fine poetry after this; and perhaps the prolixity is very rational in a man so afflicted, but the composition is the worse for it. Samson could have known nothing of the *interlunar cave;* nor could he ever have thought about the light of the soul, and of the soul being *all in every part.*

Landor. Reminiscences of many sad afflictions have already burst upon the poet; but, instead of overwhelming him, they have endued him with redoubled might and majesty. Verses worthier of a sovereign poet, sentiments worthier of a pure, indomitable, inflexible republican, never issued from the human heart than these referring to the army, in the last effort made to rescue the English nation from disgrace and servitude:—

[265.] Had Judah that day joined, or one whole tribe,
They had by this possest the towers of Gath,
And lorded over them whom now they serve.
But what more oft, in nations grown corrupt
And by their vices brought to servitude,
Than to love bondage more than liberty,
Bondage with ease than strenuous liberty,
And to despise or envy or suspect
Whom God hath of his special favor rais'd

As their deliverer? If he aught begin,
How frequent to desert him! and at last
To heap ingratitude on worthiest deeds!

Southey. I shall be sorry to damp your enthusiasm, in however slight a degree, by pursuing our original plan in the detection of blemishes. Eyes the least clear-sighted could easily perceive one in—

297. For of such doctrine never was there school
But the heart of the fool.
And no man therein doctor but himself.

They could discern here nothing but the quaint conceit; and it never occurred to them that the chorus knew nothing of schools and doctors. A line above, there is an expression not English. For "who believe not the existence of God,"—

295. Who *think* not God at all.

And is it captious to say that, when Manoah's locks are called "white as down," whiteness is no characteristic of down? Perhaps you will be propitiated by the number of words in our days equally accented on the first syllable, which in this drama the great poet, with all his authority, has stamped on the second; such as *impùlse*, *edìct*, *contràry*, *prescript*, the substantive *contèst*, *instinct*, *crystàlline*, *pretèxt*.

Landor. I wish we had preserved them all in that good condition, excepting the substantive *contest*, which ought to follow the lead of *conquest*. But "now we have got to the worst, let us keep to the worst," is the sound conservative maxim of the day.

Southey. I perceive you adhere to your doctrine in the termination of Aristo*teles*.

Landor. If we were to say Aris*totle*, why not Themis*tocle*, Empe*docle*, and Peri*cle*? Here, too, *neath* has always a mark of elision before it, quite unnecessarily. From *neath* comes *nether*, which reminds me that it would be better spelled, as it was formerly, *nethe*.

But go on: we can do no good yet.

Southey.

341. That *invincible* Samson, far renowned.

Here, unless we place the accent on the third syllable, the verse assumes another form, and such as is used only in the ludicrous or light poetry, scanned thus :—

That invin | cible Sam | son, &c.

There is great eloquence and pathos in the speech of Manoah; but the "*scorpion's tail behind*," in verse 360, is inapposite. Perhaps my remark is unworthy of your notice; but, as you are reading on, you seem to ponder on something which is worthy.

Landor. How very much would literature have lost, if this marvellously great and admirable man had omitted the various references to himself and his contemporaries! He had grown calmer at the close of life, and saw in Cromwell as a fault what he had seen before as a necessity or a virtue. The indignities offered to the sepulchre and remains of the greatest of English sovereigns, by the most ignominious, made the tears of Milton gush from his darkened eyes, and extorted from his generous and grateful heart this exclamation :—

[368.] Alas! methinks when God hath chosen one
To worthiest deeds, if he through frailty err,
He should not so o'erwhelm, and as a thrall
Subject him to so foul indignities,
Be it but for honor's sake of former deeds.

How supremely grand is the close of Samson's speech!

Southey. In verse 439, we know what is meant by—

Slewst them many a slain.

But the expression is absurd: he could not slay the slain. We also may object to—

[553.] Use of strongest wines
And strongest drinks,

knowing that wines were the "strongest drinks" in those times: perhaps they might have been made stronger by the infusion of herbs and spices. You will again be saddened by the deep harmony of those verses in which the poet represents his own condition. Verse 590 :—

All otherwise to me my thoughts portend, &c.

In verses 729 and 731, the words *address* and *addrest* are inelegant:—

> And words *addrest* seem into tears dissolved,
> Wetting the borders of her silken veil;
> But now again she *makes address* to speak.

In verse 734,—

> Which to have merited, without excuse,
> I cannot but acknowledge,

—the comma should be expunged after *excuse*, else the sentence is ambiguous. And in 745, "what *amends is* in my power." We have no singular, as the French have, for this word; although many use it ignorantly, as Milton does inadvertently.

934. Thy *fair* enchanted cup and warbling charms.

Here we are forced by the double allusion to recognise the later mythos of Circe. The cup alone, or the warbling alone, might belong to any other enchantress,—any of his own or of a preceding age,—since we know that in all times certain herbs and certain incantations were used by sorceresses.

The chorus in this tragedy is not always conciliating and assuaging. Never was anything more bitter against the female sex than the verses from 1010 to 1060. The invectives of Euripides are never the outpourings of the chorus, and their venom is cold as hemlock; those of Milton are hot and corrosive:—

> It is not virtue, wisdom, valor, wit,
> *Strength, comeliness of shape, or amplest merit,*
> That woman's love *can win or long inherit;*
> But what it is, is hard to say,
> *Harder to hit,*
> Which way soever men refer it:
> Much like thy riddle, Samson, in one day
> Or seven, *though one should musing sit.*

Never has Milton, in poetry or prose, written worse than this. The beginning of the second line is untrue; the conclusion is tautological. In the third, it is needless to inform us that what is not to be gained is not to be inherited; or, in the fourth, that what is hard to *say* is hard to *hit;* but it really is a new discovery that it is harder. Where is the distinction in the idea he would present

of *saying* and *hitting?* However, we will not "musing sit" on these dry thorns.

[1034.] Whate'er it be to wisest men and best,
Seeming at first all heavenly under virgin veil, &c.

This is a very ugly misshapen Alexandrine. The verse would be better and more regular by the omission of "*seeming*" or "at first," neither of which is necessary.

Landor. The giant Harapha is not expected to talk wisely; but he never would have said to Samson,—

1081. Thou knowest me now,
If thou at all art known; much I have heard
Of thy prodigious strength.

A pretty clear evidence of his being somewhat known.

[1133.] And black enchantments, some magician's art.

No doubt of that. But what glorious lines from 1167 to 1179! I cannot say so much of these:—

[1323.] Have they not sword-players and every sort
Of gymnic artists, wrestlers, riders, runners,
Jugglers and dancers, antics, mummers, mimics?

No, certainly not: the jugglers and the dancers they probably had, but none of the rest. *Mummers* are said to derive their appellation from the word *mum*. I rather think *mum* came corrupted from them. *Mummer* in reality is *mime*. We know how frequently the letter *r* has obtained an undue place at the end of words. The English mummers were men who acted, without speaking, in coarse pantomime. There are many things which I have marked between this place and verse 1665.

1634. That to the arched roof gave main support.

There were no arches in the time of Samson; but the mention of the two pillars in the centre makes it requisite to imagine such a structure. Verse 1660,—

O dearly bought revenge, yet glorious.

It is Milton's practice to make vowels syllabically weak either

coalesce with or yield to others. In no place but at the end of a verse would he protract *glorious* into a trisyllable. The structure of his versification was founded on the Italian, in which *io* and *ia* in some words are monosyllables in all places but the last. Verse 1664,—

> Among thy slain self-kill'd,
> Not willingly, but tangled in the fold
> Of dire necessity, whose law in death conjoined
> Thee with thy slaughtered foes, in number more
> Than all thy life hath slain before.

Milton differs extremely from the Athenian dramatists in neglecting the beauty of his choruses. Here the third line is among his usually bad Alexandrines; and there is not only a debility of rhythm, but also a redundancy of words. The verse would be better, and the sense too, without the words "*in death.*" And "*slaughtered*" is alike unnecessary in the next. Farther on, the chorus talks about the phœnix. Now the phœnix, although Oriental, was placed in the Orient by the Greeks. If the phœnix "*no second knows*," it is probable it knows "*no third.*" All this nonsense is prated while Samson is lying dead before them. But the poem is a noble poem; and the characters of Samson and Delilah are drawn with precision and truth. The Athenian dramatists, both tragic and comic, have always one chief personage, one central light: Homer has not in the *Iliad*, nor has Milton in the *Paradise Lost*, nor has Shakspeare in several of his best tragedies. We find it in Racine, in the great Corneille, in the greater Schiller. In Calderon, and the other dramatists of Spain, it rarely is wanting; but their principal delight is in what we call plot or intrigue,—in plainer English (and very like it), intricacy and trick. Hurd, after saying of the *Samson Agonistes*, that "it is, as might be expected, a masterpiece," tucks up his lawn sleeve and displays his slender wrist against Lowth. Nothing was ever equal to his cool effrontery when he says, "This critic, *and all such*, are greatly *out in* their judgments," &c. He might have profited, both in criticism and in style, by reading Lowth more attentively and patiently. In which case, he never would have written *out in*, nor *obliged to such freedoms*, nor twenty more

such strange things. Lowth was against the chorus. Hurd says, "It will be constantly wanting to rectify the wrong conclusions of the audience." Would it not be quite as advisable to drop carefully a few drops of laudanum on a lump of sugar, to lull the excitement of the sufferers by the tragedy? The chorus in Milton comes well provided with this narcotic. Voltaire wrote an *opera*, and intended it for a serious one, on the same subject. He decorated it with choruses sung to Venus and Adonis, and represented Samson more gallantly French than either. He pulled down the temple on the stage, and cried,—

J'ai réparé ma honte, et j'expire en vainqueur!

And yet Voltaire was often a graceful poet, and sometimes a judicious critic. It may be vain and useless to propose for imitation the chief excellences of a great author, such being the gift of transcendent genius, and not an acquisition to be obtained by study or labor; but it is only in great authors that defects are memorable when pointed out, and unsuspected until they are distinctly. For which reason, I think it probable that at no distant time I may publish your remarks, if you consent to it.

Southey. It is well known in what spirit I made them, and as you have objected to few, if any, I leave them at your discretion. Let us now pass on to *Lycidas*. It appears to me that Warton is less judicious than usual, in his censure of—

[5.] Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.

I find in his note, "The *mellowing* year could not affect the leaves of the laurel, the myrtle, and the ivy, which last is characterized before as *never sere*." The ivy sheds its leaves in the proper season, though never all at once, and several hang on the stem longer than a year. In verse 89,—

But now my oat proceeds
And listens to the herald of the sea.

Does the oat listen?

119. Blind mouths that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook.

Now, although mouths and bellies may designate the possessors or bearers, yet surely the *blind mouth* holding a shepherd's crook is a fitter representation of the shepherd's dog than of the shepherd. Verse 145, may he not have written the *gloming* violet,—not indeed well, but better than *glowing ?*

154. Ay me! while thee the *shores* and sounding seas
Wash far away.

Surely the *shores* did not.

[176.] And hears the *inexpressive* nuptial song
In the blest kingdoms *meek* of joy and love.

What can be the meaning?

Landor. It is to be regretted, not so much that Milton has adopted the language and scenery and mythology of the ancients, as that he confounds the real simple field-shepherds with the mitred shepherds of St Paul's Churchyard and Westminster Abbey, and ties the two-handed sword against the crook. I have less objection to the luxury spread out before me than to be treated with goose and mince-pie on the same plate.

No poetry so harmonious had ever been written in our language; but in the same free metre both Tasso and Guarini had captivated the ear of Italy. In regard to poetry, the *Lycidas* will hardly bear a comparison with the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*. Many of the ideas in both are taken from Beaumont and Fletcher, from Raleigh and Marlowe, and from a poem in the first edition of Burton's *Melancholy*. Each of these has many beauties; but there are couplets in Milton's worth them all. We must, however, do what we set about. If we see the faun walk lamely, we must look at his foot, find the thorn, and extract it.

Southey. There are those who defend in the first verses the matrimonial, or other less legitimate, alliance of *Cerberus* and *Midnight;* but I have too much regard for *Melancholy* to subscribe to the filiation, especially as it might exclude her presently from the nunnery, whither she is invited as *pensive*, *devout*, and *pure*. The union of Erebus and Night is much spoken of in poetical circles, and we have authority for announcing it to the public; but *Midnight*, like *Cerberus*, is a misnomer. We have occasionally heard, in objurgation, a man called a son of a dog, on the

mother's side; but never was there goddess of that parentage. You are pleased to find Milton writing *pinch't* instead of *pinched*.

Landor. Certainly; for there never existed the word "pinch*ed*," and never can exist the word "pinc*h'd*." In the same verse he writes *sed* for *said*. We have both of these, and we should keep them diligently. The pronunciation is always *sed*, excepting in rhyme. For the same reason, we should retain *agen* as well as *again*.

What a cloud of absurdities has been whiffed against me, by no unlearned men, about the *Conversation* of Tooke and Johnson! Their own petty conceits rise up between their eyes and the volume they are negligently reading, and utterly obscure or confound it irretrievably. One would represent me as attempting to undermine our native tongue; another as modernizing; a third as antiquating it. Whereas I am trying to underprop, not to undermine: I am trying to stop the man-milliner at his ungainly work of trimming and flouncing; I am trying to show how graceful is our English, not in its stiff decrepitude, not in its riotous luxuriance, but in its hale mid-life. I would make bad writers follow good ones, and good writers accord with themselves. If all cannot be reduced into order, is that any reason why nothing should be done toward it? If languages and men too are imperfect, must we never make an effort to bring them a few steps nearer to what is preferable? If we find on the road a man who has fallen from his horse, and who has three bones dislocated, must we refuse him our aid because one is quite broken? It is by people who answer in the affirmative to these questions, or seem to answer so,—it is by such writers that our language for the last half-century has fallen more rapidly into corruption and decomposition than any other ever spoken among men. The worst losses are not always those which are soonest felt, but those which are felt too late.

Southey. I should have adopted all your suggestions in orthography, if I were not certain that my bookseller would protest against it as ruinous. If you go no farther than to write *compell* and *foretell*, the compositor will correct your oversight; yet surely there should be some sign that the last syllable of those verbs ought to be spelled differently, as they are pronounced differently, from *shrivel* and *level*.

Landor. Let us run back to our plantain. But a bishop

stands in the way,—a bishop no other than Hurd, who says that "Milton shows his judgment in celebrating Shakspeare's comedies rather than his tragedies." Pity he did not live earlier!—he would have served among the mummers both for bishop and fool. We now come to the *Penseroso*, in which title there are many who doubt the propriety of the spelling. Marsand, an editor of Petrarca, has defended the poet who used equally *pensiero* and *pensero*. The mode is more peculiarly Lombard. The Milanese and Comascs invariably say *penser*. Yet it is wonderful how, at so short a distance, and professing to speak the same language, they differ in many expressions. The wonder ceases with those who have resided long in the country, and are curious about such matters, when they discover that at two gates of Milan two languages are spoken. The same thing occurs in Florence itself, where a street is inhabited by the Camaldolese, whose language is as little understood by learned academicians as that of Dante himself. Beyond the eastern gates a morning's walk, you come into Varlunga, a pastoral district, in which the people speak differently from both. I have always found a great pleasure in collecting the leaves and roots of these phonetic simples, especially in hill-countries. Nothing so conciliates many, and particularly the uneducated, as to ask and receive instruction from them. I have not hesitated to collect it from swineherds and Fra Diavolo: I should have looked for it in vain among universities and professors.

Southey. Turning back to the *Allegro*, I find an amusing note conveying the surprising intelligence, all the way from Oxford, that *eglantine* means really the *dog-rose*; and that both dog-rose and *honeysuckle* (for which Milton mistook it) "are often growing against the sides *or walls* of a house." Thus says Mr Thomas Warton. I wish he had also told us in what quarter of the world a house has *sides* without *walls* of some kind or other. But it really is strange that Milton should have misapplied the word, at a time when botany was become the favorite study. I do not recollect whether Cowley had yet written his Latin poems on the appearances and qualities of plants. What are you smiling at?

Landor. Our old field of battle, where Milton

> Calls up him who left untold
> The story of Cambuscan bold.

Chaucer—like Shakspeare, like Homer, like Milton, like every great poet that ever lived—derived from open sources the slender origin of his immortal works. Imagination is not a mere workshop of images, great and small, as there are many who would represent it; but sometimes *thoughts* also are imagined before they are felt, and descend from the brain into the bosom. Young poets imagine feelings to which in reality they are strangers.

Southey. Copy them rather.

Landor. Not entirely. The copybook acts on the imagination. Unless they felt the truth or the verisimilitude, it could not take possession of them. But feelings and images fly from distant coverts into their little field, without their consciousness whence they come, and rear young ones there which are properly their own. Chatterton hath shown as much imagination, in the *Bristowe Tragedie* as in that animated allegory which begins,—

When Freedom dreste in blood-stain'd veste.

Keats is the most imaginative of our poets, after Chaucer, Spenser, Shakspeare, and Milton.

Southey. I am glad you admit my favorite, Spenser.

Landor. He is my favorite too, if you admit the expression without the signification of precedency. I do not think him equal to Chaucer even in imagination; and he appears to me very inferior to him in all other points, excepting harmony. Here the miscarriage is in Chaucer's age, not in Chaucer, many of whose verses are highly beautiful, but never (as in Spenser) one whole period. I love the geniality of his temperature,—no straining, no effort, no storm, no fury. His vivid thoughts burst their way to us through the coarsest integuments of language.

The heart is the creator of the poetical world: only the atmosphere is from the brain. Do I then undervalue imagination? No indeed; but I find imagination where others never look for it,—in character multiform yet consistent. Chaucer first united the two glorious realms of Italy and England. Shakspeare came after, and subjected the whole universe to his dominion. But he mounted the highest steps of his throne under those bland

skies which had warmed the congenial breasts of Chaucer and Boccaccio.

The powers of imagination are but slender when it can invent only shadowy appearances: much greater are requisite to make an inert and insignificant atom grow up into greatness,—to give it form, life, mobility, and intellect. Spenser hath accomplished the one; Shakspeare and Chaucer, the other. Pope and Dryden have displayed a little of it in their *Satires*. In passing, let me express my wish that writers who compare them in generalities, and who lean mostly toward the stronger, would attempt to trim the balance by placing Pope among our best critics on poetry, while Dryden is knee-deep below John Dennis. You do not like either: I read both with pleasure, so long as they keep to the couplet. But *St Cecilia's* music-book is interlined with epigrams; and *Alexander's Feast* smells of gin at second-hand, with true Briton fiddlers full of native *talent* in the orchestra.

Southey. Dryden says: "It were an easy matter to produce some *thousands* of Chaucer's verses *which* are lame for want of half, and sometimes a whole, foot, *which* no pronunciation can make otherwise."

Landor. Certainly no pronunciation but the proper one can do it.

Southey. On the opposite quarter, comparing him with Boccaccio, he says: "He has refined on the Italian, and has mended his stories in his way of telling. Our countryman carries weight, and yet wins the race at disadvantage."

Landor. Certainly our brisk and vigorous poet carries with him no weight in criticism.

Southey. Vivacity and shrewd sense are Dryden's characteristics, with quickness of perception rather than accuracy of remark, and consequently a facility rather than a fidelity of expression.

We are coming to our last days, if, according to the prophet Joel, "blood and fire and pillars of smoke" are signs of them. Again to Milton and the *Penseroso*.

90. What worlds, or what vast regions . . .

Are not *vast regions* included in *world?* In verses 119, 120, 121, 122, the same rhymes are repeated.

Thus, night, oft see me in thy pale career,

is the only verse of ten syllables, and should be reduced to the ranks. You always have strongly objected to epithets which designate dresses and decoration; of which epithets, it must be acknowledged, both Milton and Shakspeare are unreasonably fond. *Civilsuited, frownced, kercheft,* come close together. I suspect they will find as little favor in your eyes as *embroidered, trimmed,* and *gilded.*

Landor. I am fond of gilding, not in our poetry, but in our apartments, where it gives a sunniness greatly wanted by the climate. Pindar and Virgil are profuse of *gold;* but they reject the *gilded.*

Southey. I have counted ninety-three lines in Milton where *gold* is used, and only four where *gilded* is. A question is raised whether *pale,* in—

[156.] To walk the studious cloisters *pale,*

is substantive or adjective. What is your opinion?

Landor. That it is an adjective. Milton was very Italian, as you know, in his custom of adding a second epithet after the substantive, where one had preceded it. The Wartons followed him. Yet Thomas Warton would read in this verse the substantive, giving as his reason that our poet is fond of the singular. In the present word there is nothing extraordinary in finding it thus. We commonly say, within the *pale* of the church, of the law, &c. But *pale* is an epithet to which Milton is very partial. Just before, he has written "*pale career,*" and we shall presently see the "*pale-eyed priest.*"

Southey.

With antick pillars massy-proof.

The Wartons are fond of repeating in their poetry the word *massy-proof,*—in my opinion an inelegant one, and, if a compound, compounded badly. It seems more applicable to castles, whose *massiveness* gave *proof* of resistance. *Antick* was probably spelled *antike* by the author, who disdained to follow the fashion in *antique, Pindaricque,* &c., affected by Cowley and others, who had been, or would be thought to have been, domiciliated with Charles II. in France.

Landor. Whenever I come to the end of these poems, or

either of them, it is always with a sigh of regret. We will pass by the *Arcades*, of which the little that is good is copied from Shakspeare.

Southey. Nevertheless, we may consider it as a *nebula*, which was not without its efficiency in forming the star of *Comus*. This *Mask* is modelled on another by George Peele. Two brothers wander in search of a sister enthralled by a magician. They call aloud her name, and echo repeats it, as here in *Comus*. Much has also been taken from Puteanus, who borrowed at once the best and the worst of his poem from Philostratus. In the third verse, I find *spirits* a dissyllable, which is unusual in Milton.

Landor. I can account for his monosyllabic sound by his fondness of imitating the Italian *spirto*. But you yourself are addicted to these quavers, if you will permit me the use of the word here; and I find *spirit*, *peril*, &c., occupying no longer a time than if the second vowel were wanting. I do not approve of the apposition in—

[38.] The *nodding horrour* of whose shady brows.

Before which I find—

[21.] Sea-girt isles
That, like to rich and various gems, inlay
The *unadorned* bosom of the deep.

How can a bosom be *unadorned* which already is *inlaid* with gems?

Southey. You will object no less strongly to—

[115.] Sounds and seas with all their finny drove,

sounds being parts of *seas*.

Landor. There are yet graver faults. Where did the young lady ever hear or learn such expressions as "Swilled insolence?"[7]

[188.] The *grey-hooded Even*,
Like a sad votarist in *palmer's weed*,
Rose from the hindmost *wheels* of Phœbus' wain.

[7 Line 178, Globe ed.]

Here is Eve, a manifest female, with her own proper hood upon her head, taking the other parts of male attire, and rising (by good luck) from under a wagon-wheel. But nothing in Milton, and scarcely any thing in Cowley, is viler than—

[195.] Else, O *thievish* night,
Why should'st thou, but for some *felonious* end,
In thy *dark-lantern* thus close up the stars.

It must have been a capacious *dark-lantern* that held them all.

That Nature hung in heaven, and fill'd their lamps
With everlasting oil.

Hardly so bad; but very bad is—

[221.] Does a *sable* cloud
Turn forth her *silver lining* on the night?

A greater and more momentous fault is that three soliloquies come in succession for about 240 lines together.

[291.] What time the labored ox
In his loose traces from the furrow came
And the swinkt hedger at his supper sat.

These are blamed by Warton, but blamed in the wrong place. The young lady, being in the wood, could have seen nothing of ox or hedger, and was unlikely to have made any previous observations on their work-hours. But, in the summer,—and this was in summer,—neither the ox nor the hedger are at work. That the ploughman always quits it at noon, as Warton says he does, is untrue. When he quits it at noon, it is for his dinner. Gray says,—

The ploughman homeward plods his weary way.

He may do that, but certainly not at the season when—

The beetle wheels her drony flight.

Nevertheless, the stricture is captious: for the ploughman may return from the field, although not from ploughing; and *ploughman* may be accepted for any agriculturist. Certainly such must have been Virgil's meaning when he wrote—

Quos durus arator
Observans nido implumes detraxit.

For ploughing, in Italy more especially, is never the labor in June, when the nightingale's young are hatched. Gray's verse is a good one, which is more than can be said of Virgil's.

[230.] Sweet Echo! sweetest nymph! that livest unseen
Within thy airy shell!

The habitation is better adapted to an oyster than to Echo. We must, however, go on and look after the young gentlemen. Comus says,—

[294.] I saw them under a green mantling vine
Plucking ripe clusters, &c.

It is much to be regretted that the banks of the Severn in our days present no such facilities. You would find some difficulty in teaching the readers of poetry to read metrically the exquisite verses which follow. What would they make of—

[302.] And[8] as I | past I | worshipt it!

These are the true times; and they are quite unintelligible to those who divide our verses into iambics, with what they call *licences*.

Southey. We have found the two brothers; and never were two young gentlemen in stiffer doublets.

[331.] *Unmuffle*, ye faint stars, &c.

The elder, although "as smooth as Hebe's his unrazor'd lip," talks not only like a man, but like a philosopher of much experience,—

[362.] What need a *man* forestall his date of grief, &c.

How should he know that—

[393.] Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree,
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon watch with unenchanted eye
To save her blossoms and defend her fruit, &c.?

[[8] Line 301 reads:

"I was awe-strook.
And, as I passed, I worshipped. If those you seek,
It were a journey like the path to Heaven
To help you find them."]

Landor. We now come to a place where we have only the choice of a contradiction or nonsense :—

[378.] She *plumes* her feathers and lets grow her wings.

There is no sense in *pluming* a plume. Beyond a doubt, Milton wrote *prunes*, and subsequently it was printed *plumes* to avoid what appeared a contrariety. And a contrariety it would be, if the word *prune* were to be taken in no other sense than the gardener's. We suppose it must mean to *cut shorter;* but its real signification is to *trim*, which is usually done by that process. Milton here means to *smoothen* and *put in order: prune* is better. Among the strange, unaccountable expressions which within our memory, or a little earlier, were carried down, like shingles by a sudden torrent, over our language, can you tell me what writer first wrote "*unbidden tears*"?

Southey. No indeed. The phrase is certainly a curiosity, although no rarity. I wish some logician, or (it being beyond the reach of any) some metaphysician, would attempt to render us an account of it. Milton has never used *unbidden* where it really would be significant, and only once *unbid.* Can you go forward with this "Elder brother"?

Landor. Let us try. I wish he would turn off his "liveried angels," verse 455, and would say nothing about lust. How could he have learned that lust—

[464.] By unchaste looks, loose gestures, and foul talk,
But most by lewd and lavish act of sin, &c.?

Can you tell me what wolves are "*stabled* wolves," verse 534?

Southey. Not exactly. But here is another verse of the same construction as you remarked before :—

[599.] And earth's base built on stubble. But come, let's on.

This was done by choice, not by necessity. He might have omitted the *But*, and have satisfied the herd bovine and porcine. Just below are two others in which three syllables are included in the time of two.

[602.] But for that damn'd magician, let him be girt, &c.

605. Harpies and hydras, or all the monstrous forms, &c.

And again—

615. And crumble all thy sinews. Why, prithee, shepherd.

Landor. You have crept unsoiled from—

[604.] Under the *sooty* flag of Acheron.

And you may add many dozens more of similar verses, if you think it worth your while to go back for them. In verse 610, I find "yet" redundant:—

I love thy courage *yet*, and bold emprise.

Commentators and critics bogle sadly a little farther on:—

[632.] But in another country, as he said,
Bore a bright golden flower; *but* not in this soil.

On which hear T. Warton: "Milton, notwithstanding his singular skill in music, appears to have had a very bad ear." Warton was celebrated in his time for his great ability in raising a laugh in the common-room. He has here shown a capacity more extensive in that faculty. Two or three honest men have run to Milton's assistance, and have applied a remedy to his ear: they would help him to mend the verse. In fact, it is a bad one: he never wrote it so. The word *but* is useless in the second line, and comes with the worse grace after the *But* in the preceding. They who can discover faults in versification where there are none but of their own imagining have failed to notice verse 666:—

Why are you | vext, lady, | why do you | frown?

Now, this in reality is inadmissible, being of a metre quite different from the rest. It is dactylic; and consequently, although the number of syllables is just, the number of feet is defective. But Milton, in reciting it, would bring it back to the order he had established. He would read it—

Why ā̆re you vext?

And then in a faltering and falling accent, and in the tender trochee,—

Lā̆dy | why do you frown?

There are some who in a few years can learn all the harmony of Milton; there are others who must go into another state of existence for this felicity.

Southey. I am afraid I am about to check for a moment your enthusiasm, in bringing you—

[707.] To those budge *doctors* of the Stoic *fur*,

whom Comus is holding in derision.

Landor. Certainly it is odd enough to find him in such company. It is the first time either Cynic or Stoic ever put on fur; and it must be confessed it little becomes them. We are told that, verse 727,—

And live like Nature's bastards, not her sons,

—is taken from the Bible. Whencesoever it may be taken, the expression is faulty; for a son may be a bastard, and quite as surely a bastard may be a son. In verse 732, "the unsought diamonds" are ill-placed; and we are told that Doctors Warburton and Newton called these four lines "exceeding childish." They are so, for all that. I wonder none of the fraternity had his fingers at liberty to count the syllables in verse 743:—

If you let | slip time, like a neglected rose, &c.

I wish he had cast away the *yet* in verse 755.

Think what; and be advised; you are but young yet.

Not only is *yet* an expletive, and makes the verse inharmonious, but the syllables *young* and *yet* coming together would of themselves be intolerable anywhere. What a magnificent passage! How little poetry in any language is comparable to this, which closes the lady's reply,—

792-799. Thou art not fit to hear thyself convinced!

This is worthy of Shakspeare himself in his highest mood, and is unattained and unattainable by any other poet. What a transport of enthusiasm; what a burst of harmony! He who writes one sentence equal to this will have reached a higher rank in poetry than any has done since this was written.

Southey. I thought it would be difficult to confine you to censure, as we first proposed. The anger and wit of Comus effervesce into flatness, one dashed upon the other.

[806.] Come, no more;
This is mere moral babble, and direct
Against the canon laws of our foundation.

He rolls out from the "cynic tub" to put on cap and gown. The laughter of Milton soon assumed a wry, puritanical cast. Even while he had the *molle*, he wanted the *facetum* in all its parts and qualities. It is hard upon Milton, and harder still upon inferior poets, that every expression of his used by a predecessor should be noted as borrowed or stolen. Here, in verse 812,—

Will bathe the drooping spirits in delight

is traced to several, and might be traced to more. Chaucer, in whose songs it is more beautiful than elsewhere, writes,—

His harte bathed in a bath of blisse.

Probably he took the idea from the bath of knights. You could never have seen Chaucer, nor the rest, when you wrote those verses at Rugby [9] on Godiva: you drew them out of the *Square Pool*, and assimilated them to the tranquillity of prayer,—such a tranquillity, as is the effect of prayer on the boyish mind, when it has any effect at all.

Landor. I have expunged many thoughts for their close resemblance to what others had written, whose works I never saw until after. But all thinking men must think, all imaginative men must imagine, many things in common, although they differ. Some abhor what others embrace; but the thought strikes them equally. With some an idea is productive, with others it lies inert. I have resigned and abandoned many things because I unreasonably doubted my legitimate claim to them, and many more because I believed I had enough substance in the house without them, and that the retention might raise a clamor in my courtyard. I do not look very sharply after the poachers on my property. One of your neighbors has broken down a shell in my

[9 See the Conversation between Leofric and Godiva, vol. v.]

grotto, and a town gentleman has lamed a rabbit in my warren: heartily welcome both. Do not shut your book: we have time left for the rest.

Southey. Sabrina in person is now before us. Johnson talks absurdly, not on the long narration, for which he has reasons, but in saying that "it is of no use, because it is false, and therefore unsuitable to a good being." Warton answers this objection with great propriety. It may be added that things in themselves very false are very true in poetry, and produce not only delight, but beneficial moral effects. This is an instance. The part before us is copied from Fletcher's *Faithful Shepherdess*. The Spirit, in his thanksgiving to Sabrina for liberating the lady, is extremely warm in good wishes. After the aspiration,—

[934.] May thy lofty head be crown'd
With many a tower and terrace round,

he adds,—

And here and there, *thy banks upon*,
With groves of myrrh and cinnamon.

It would have been more reasonable to have said,—

And here and there some fine fat geese,
And ducklings waiting for green pease.

The conclusion is admirable, though it must be acknowledged that the piece is undramatic. Johnson makes an unanswerable objection to the prologue; but he must have lost all the senses that are affected by poetry, when he calls the whole drama *tediously instructive*. There is, indeed, here and there prolixity; yet refreshing springs burst out profusely in every part of the wordy wilderness. We are now at the *Sonnets*. I know your dislike of this composition.

Landor. In English, not in Italian; but Milton has ennobled it in our tongue, and has trivialized it in that. He who is deficient in readiness of language is half a fool in writing, and more than half in conversation. Ideas fix themselves about the tongue, and fall to the ground when they are in want of that support. Unhappily, Italian poetry in the age of Milton was almost at its worst, and he imitated what he heard repeated or praised. It is better to say no more about it, or about his *Psalms*, when we come to them.

Southey. Among his minor poems several are worthless.

Landor. True; but, if they had been lost, we should be glad to have recovered them. Cromwell would not allow Lely to omit or diminish a single wart upon his face; yet there were many and great ones. If you had found a treasure of gold and silver, and afterwards in the same excavation an urn in which only brass coins were contained, would you reject them? You will find in his English *Sonnets* some of a much higher strain than even the best of Dante's. The great poet is sometimes recumbent, but never languid; often unadorned,—I wish I could honestly say, not often inelegant. But what noble odes (for such we must consider them) are the eighth, the fifteenth, the sixteenth, the seventeenth, and, above all, the eighteenth! There is a mild and serene sublimity in the nineteenth. In the twentieth there is the festivity of Horace, with a due observance of his precept, applicable metaphorically,—

Simplici myrto nihil adlabores.

This is among the few English poems which are quite classical, according to our notions, as the Greeks and Romans have impressed them. It is pleasing to find Milton, in his later days, thus disposed to cheerfulness and conviviality. There are climates of the earth, it is said, in which a warm season intervenes between autumn and winter. Such a season came to reanimate, not the earth itself, but what was highest upon it.

A few of Milton's *Sonnets* are extremely bad: the rest are excellent. Among all Shakspeare's, not a single one is very admirable, and few sink very low. They are hot and pothery: there is much condensation, little delicacy; like raspberry jam without cream, without crust, without bread, to break its viscidity. But I would rather sit down to one of them again than to a string of such musty sausages as are exposed in our streets at the present dull season. Let us be reverent; but only where reverence is due, even in Milton and in Shakspeare. It is a privilege to be near enough to them to see their faults: never are we likely to abuse it. Those in high station, who have the folly and the impudence to look down on us, possess none such. Silks perish as the silkworms have perished; kings, as their carpets and canopies. There are objects too great for these animalcules of

the palace to see well and wholly. Do you doubt that the most fatuous of the Georges, whichever it was, thought himself Newton's superior? Or that any minister, any peer of Parliament, held the philosopher so high as the assayer of the mint? Was it not always in a grated hole, among bars and bullion, that they saw whatever they could see of his dignity? Was it ever among the interminable worlds he brought down for men to contemplate? Yet Newton stood incalculably more exalted above the glorious multitude of stars and suns, than these ignorant and irreclaimable wretches above the multitude of the street. Let every man hold this faith, and it will teach him what is lawful and right in veneration; namely, that there are divine beings and immortal men on the one side, mortal men and brute beasts on the other. The two parties stand compact; each stands separate: the distance is wide, but there is nothing in the interval.

Will you go on, after a minute or two, for I am inclined to silence?

Southey. Next to the *Sonnets* come the *Odes*, written much earlier. One stanza in that *On the Morning of the Nativity* has been often admired. What think you of this stanza, the fourth? But the preceding and the following are beautiful too.

Landor. I think it incomparably the noblest piece of lyric poetry in any modern language I am conversant with; and I regret that so much of the remainder throws up the bubbles and fetid mud of the Italian. In the thirteenth, what a rhyme is *harmony* with *symphony!* In the eighteenth,—

Swinges the scaly horror of his *folded* tail.

I wish you would unfold the folded tail for me: I do not like to meddle with it.

Southey. Better to rest on the fourth stanza, and then regard fresh beauties in the preceding and the following. Beyond these, very far beyond, are the nineteenth and twentieth. But why is the priest *pale-eyed?*

Landor. Who knows? I would not delay you with a remark on the modern spelling of what Milton wrote *kist*, and what some editors have turned into *kiss'd;* a word which could not exist in its contraction, and never did exist in speech

even uncontracted. Yet they make *kiss'd* rhyme with *whist*. Let me remark again on the word *unexpressive*, verse 116, used before in *Lycidas*, verse 176, and defended by the authority of Shakspeare (*As You Like It*. Act III., 82.),—

The fair, the chaste, the *unexpressive* she.

This is quite as wrong as *resistless* for *irresistible*, and even more so. I suspect it was used by Shakspeare, who uses it only once, merely to turn into ridicule a fantastic *euphuism* of the day. Milton, in his youth, was fond of seizing on odd things wherever he found them.

Southey.

130. And let the base of heaven's deep organ blow.

Landor. No, I will not: I am too puritanical in poetry for that.

Southey. The twenty-third, "And sullen Moloch," is grand, until we come to—

The brutish gods of Nile, *as fast*
Isis and Osiris and the dog Anubis, haste.

As fast as what? We have heard nothing but the ring of cymbals calling the grisly king. We come to worse in twenty-six,—

So when the sun *in bed*
Curtain'd with cloudy *red*,
Pillows his chin, &c.

[xxvii.] And all about the *courtly stable*
Bright-harnest angels sit . . . in order *serviceable*.

They would be the less *serviceable* by being seated, and not the more so for being harnessed.

The Passion.—The five first verses of the sixth stanza are good, and very acceptable after the "letters where my tears have *washt a wannish white*." The last two verses are guilty of such an offence as Cowley himself was never indicted for. The sixth stanza lies between two others full of putrid conceits, like a large pearl which has exhausted its oyster.

Landor. But can any thing be conceived more exquisite than—

Grove and spring
Would soon unbosom all their echoes mild?

This totally withdraws us from regarding the strange superfetation just below.

The Circumcision, verse 6 :—

> Now mourn ; and if sad *share* with us to *bear*.

Death of an Infant.—It is never at a time when the feelings are most acute that the poet expresses them ; but sensibility and taste shrink alike, on such occasions, from witticisms and whimsies. Here are too many ; but the last two stanzas are very beautiful. Look at the note. Here are six verses, four of them in Shakspeare, containing specimens of the orthography you recommend :—

> Sweet Rose ! fair flower, untimely *pluckt*, soon faded,
> *Pluckt* in the bud and faded in the spring,
> Bright Orient pearle, alack too timely shaded !
> Fair creature *kil'd* too soon by Death's sharp sting.

Again,—

> Sweete lovely Rose ! ill *pluckt* before thy time,
> Fair worthy sonne, not conquered, but *betraid*.

Southey. The spelling of Milton is not always to be copied, though it is better on the whole than any other writer's. He continues to write *fift* and *sixt*. In what manner would he write *eighth ?* If he omitted the final *h*, there would be irregularity and confusion. Beside, how would he continue ? Would he say the *tent* for the *tenth*, and the *thirtent*, *fourtent*, &c. ?

Landor. We have corrected and fixed a few inconsiderate and random spellings ; but we have as frequently taken the wrong and rejected the right. No edition of Shakspeare can be valuable unless it strictly follows the first editors, who knew and observed his orthography.

Southey.

> . . . from thy prefixed seat didst *post*.—St. 9, v. 59.

We find the same expression more than once in Milton,—surely one very unfit for grave subjects in his time as in ours.

Let us, sitting beneath the sundial, look at the poem *On Time :*—

> Call on the lazy leaden-stepping Hours
> Whose speed is but the heavy plummet's pace.

Now, although the Hours may be the lazier for the lead about them, the plummet is the quicker for it.

> And glut thyself with what thy womb devours.

It is incredible how many disgusting images Milton indulges in.

Landor. In his age, and a century earlier, it was called strength. The Graces are absent from this chamber of Ilithyia. But the poet would have defended his position with the *horse* of Virgil,—

> *Uterumque* armato milite complent.

Southey.

> Then long eternity shall greet our bliss
> With an *individual* kiss,

meaning *undivided;* and he employs the same word in the same sense again in the *Paradise Lost.* How much more properly than as we are now in the habit of using it, calling men and women, who never saw one another, *individuals*, and often employing it beyond the person: for instance, "a man's *individual* pleasure," although the pleasure is *divided* with another or with many. The last part, from "When every thing" to the end, is magnificent. The word *sincerely* bears its Latin signification.

The next is, *At a Solemn Music.* And I think you will agree with me that a sequence of rhymes never ran into such harmony as those at the conclusion, from "That we on earth."

Landor. Excepting the commencement of Dryden's *Religio Laici*, where indeed the poetry is of a much inferior order; for the head of Dryden does not reach so high as to the loins of Milton.

Southey. No, nor to the knees. We now come to the *Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester.* He has often much injured this beautiful metre by the prefix of a syllable which distorts every foot. The *entire* change in the *Allegro*, to welcome Euphrosyne, is admirably judicious. The flow in the poem before us is trochaic: he turns it into the iambic, which is exactly its opposite. The verses beginning—

The God that sits at marriage-feast.

are infinitely less beautiful than Ovid's. These,—

He at their invoking came,
But with a scarce well-lighted flame,

—bear a faint resemblance to—

Fax quoque quam tenuit lacrimoso stridula fumo
Usque fuit, *nullosque invenit motibus ignes*.

Here the conclusion is ludicrously low,—

No marchioness, but now a queen.

In *Vacation Exercise :*

Driving *dumb silence* from the *portal door*,
Where he had *mutely sat* two years before.

What do you think of that ?

Landor. Why, I think it would have been as well if he had sat there still. In the 27th verse, he uses the noun substantive *suspect* for *suspicion ;* and why not ? I have already given my reasons for its propriety. From verse 33 to 44 is again such a series of couplets as you will vainly look for in any other poet.

Southey. "*On the Ens.*"—Nothing can be more ingenious. It was in such subjects that the royal James took delight. I know not what the rivers have to do with the present ; but they are very refreshing after coming out of the schools.

The Epitaph on Shakspeare is thought unworthy of Milton. I entertain a very different opinion of it, considering it was the first poem he ever published. Omit the two lines,—

Thou in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a live-long monument,

—and the remainder is vigorous, direct, and enthusiastic ; after invention, the greatest qualities of all great poetry.

On the Forces of Conscience.—Milton is among the least witty of mankind. He seldom attempts a witticism unless he is angry; and then he stifles it by clenching his fist. His unrhymed translation of *Quis multâ gracilis* is beautiful for four lines only.

Plain in thy neatness is almost an equivoke; *neat in thy plainness of attire* would be nearer the mark.

Landor. *Simplex munditiis* does not mean that, nor *plain* in thy "ornaments," as Warton thinks; but, without any reference to ornaments, plain in *attire*. *Mundus muliebris* (and from *mundus munditiæ*) means the toilet; and always will mean it, as long as the world lasts. We now come upon the *Psalms;* so let us close the book.

Southey. Willingly; for I am desirous of hearing you say a little more about the Latin poetry of Milton than you have said in your *Dissertation.*

Landor. Johnson gives his opinion more freely than favorably. It is wonderful that a critic, so severe in his censures on the absurdities and extravagances of Cowley, should prefer the very worst of them to the gracefulness and simplicity of Milton. His gracefulness he seldom loses; his simplicity he not always retains. But there is no Latin verse of Cowley worth preservation. Thomas May, indeed, is an admirable imitator of Lucan; so good a one, that, if in Lucan you find little poetry, in May you find none. But his verses sound well upon the anvil. It is surprising that Milton, who professedly imitated Ovid, should so much more rarely have run into conceits than when he had no such leader. His early English poetry is full of them, and in the gravest the most. The best of his Latin poems is that addressed to Christina in the name of Cromwell: it is worthy of the classical and courtly Bembo. But, in the second verse, *lucida stella* violates the metre: *stella serena* would be more descriptive and applicable. It now occurs to me, that he who edited the last *Ainsworth's Dictionary* calls Cowley *poetarum sæculi sui facile princeps,* and totally omits all mention of Shakspeare in the obituary of illustrious men. Among these he has placed not only the most contemptible critics, who bore indeed some relation to learning, but even such people as Lord Cornwallis and Lord Thurlow. Egregious ass! above all other asses by a good ear's length! Ought a publication so negligent and injudicious to be admitted into our public schools, after the world has been enriched by the erudition of Facciolati and Furlani? Shall we open the book again, and go straight on?

Southey. If you please. But as you insist on me saying most

about the English, I expect at your hands a compensation in the Latin.

Landor. I do not promise you a compensation; but I will waste no time in obeying your wishes. Severe and rigid as the character of Milton has been usually represented to us, it is impossible to read his *Elegies* without admiration for his warmth of friendship and his eloquence in expressing it. His early love of Ovid, as a master in poetry, is enthusiastic.

[23.] Non tunc Ionio quidquam cessisset Homero,
Neve foret victo laus tibi prima, Maro!

Neve is often used by the moderns for *neque*, very improperly. Although we hear much about the *Metamorphoses* and the *Æneid* being left incomplete, we may reasonably doubt whether the authors could have much improved them. There is a deficiency of skill in the composition of both poems; but every part is elaborately worked out. Nothing in Latin can excel the beauty of Virgil's versification. Ovid's at one moment has the fluency, at another the discontinuance, of mere conversation. Sorrow, passionate, dignified, and deep, is never seen in the *Metamorphoses* as in the *Æneid*; nor in the *Æneid* is any eloquence so sustained, any spirit so heroic, as in the contest between Ajax and Ulysses. But Ovid frequently, in other places, wants that gravity and potency in which Virgil rarely fails: declamation is no substitute for it. Milton, in his Latin verses, often places words beginning with *sc*, *st*, *sp*, &c., before a dactyl, which is inadmissible.

[53.] Ah! quoties dignæ stupui miracula formæ
Quæ possit senium vel reparare Jovis.

No such difficult a matter as he appears to represent it; for Jupiter, to the very last, was much given to such reparations. This elegy, with many slight faults, has great facility and spirit of its own, and has caught more by running at the side of Ovid and Tibullus. In the second elegy, *alipes* is a dactyl; *pes*, simple or compound, is long. This poem is altogether unworthy of its author. The third is on the death of Launcelot Andrews, Bishop of Winchester. It is florid, puerile, and altogether deficient in pathos. The conclusion is curious:—

Flebam turbatos Cepheleiâ pellice somnos;
Talia contingant somnia sæpe mihi.

Ovid has expressed the same wish in the same words; but the aspiration was for somewhat very dissimilar to a Bishop of Winchester. The fourth is an epistle to Thomas Young, his preceptor, a man whose tenets were puritanical, but who encouraged in his scholar the love of poetry. Much of this piece is imitated from Ovid. There are several thoughts which might have been omitted, and several expressions which might have been improved. For instance:—

[111.] Namque eris ipse *Dei* radiante sub *ægide* tutus,
Ille tibi custos et *pugil* ille tibi.

All the verses after these are magnificent. The next is on Spring,—very inferior to its predecessors.

[39.] Nam dolus et cædes *et vis*, cum nocte recessit
Neve giganteum Dii me*tuere* scelus.

How thick the faults lie here! But the invitation of the Earth to the Sun is quite Ovidian.

[122.] Semicaperque deus semideusque caper

is too much so. Elegy the sixth is addressed to Deodati.

Mitto tibi sanam non pleno ventre salutem,
Qua tu, distento, *forte* carere potes.

I have often observed, in modern Latinists of the first order, that they use indifferently *forte* and *forsan* or *forsitan*. Here is an example. *Forte* is, *by accident*, without the implication of a doubt; *forsan* always implies one. Martial wrote bad Latin when he wrote "Si *forsan*." Runchenius himself writes questionably to D'Orville, "sed *forte* res non est tanti." It surely would be better to have written *fortasse*. I should have less wondered to find *forte* in any modern Italian (excepting Bembo, who always writes with as much precision as Cicero or Cæsar); because *ma forse*, their idiom, would prompt *sed forte*.

[19.] Naso Corallæis mala carmina misit ab agris.

Untrue. He himself was discontented with them because they had lost their playfulness; but their only fault lies in their adulation. I doubt whether all the elegiac verses that have been written in the Latin language ever since are worth the books of

them he sent from Pontus. Deducting one couplet from Joannes Secundus, I would strike the bargain.

[79.] Si modó *saltem*.

The *saltem* is here redundant and contrary to Latinity.

Southey. This elegy, I think, is equable and pleasing, without any great fault or great beauty.

Landor. In the seventh, he discloses the first effects of love on him. Here are two verses which I never have read without the heart-ache:—

[15.] Ut mihi adhuc refugam quærebant lumina noctem
Nec matutinum sustinuere jubar.

We perceive at one moment the first indication of love and of blindness. Happy, had the blindness been as unreal as the love. Cupid is not exalted by a comparison with Paris and Hylas, nor the frown of Apollo magnified by the Parthian. He writes, as many did, *author* for *auctor*, very improperly. In the sixtieth verse is again *neve* for *nec;* nor is it the last time. But here come beautiful verses:—

[99.] Deme meos tandem, verum nec deme, furores;
Nescio cur, miser est suaviter omnis amans.

I wish *cur* had been *quî*. Subjoined to this elegy are ten verses in which he regrets the time he had wasted in love. Probably it was on the day (for it could not have cost him more) on which he composed it.

Southey. The series of these compositions exhibits little more than so many exercises in mythology. You have repeated to me all that is good in them, and in such a tone of enthusiasm as made me think better of them than I had ever thought before. The first of his epigrams, on Leonora Baroni, has little merit; the second, which relates to Tasso, has much.

Landor. I wish, however, that in the sixth[10] line he had substituted *illâ* for *eâdem*,—and not ôn account of the metre; for *eadem* becomes a spondee, as *eodem* in Virgil's "uno *eodemque* igni." And *sibi*, which ends the poem, is superfluous; if there must be any word, it should be *ei*, which the metre rejects. The

[10 The tenth line of this poem runs—
"Voce eadem poteras composuisse tuâ."]

Scazons against Salmasius are a miserable copy of Persius's heavy prologue to his satires; and, moreover, a copy at second-hand: for Ménage had imitated it in his invective against Mommor, whom he calls Gargilius. He begins,—

Quis expedivit psittaco suo χαιρε.

But Persius's and Ménage's at least are metrical, which Milton's in one instance are not. The fifth foot should be an iambic. In *primatum* we have a spondee. The iambics which follow, on Salmasius again, are just as faulty. They start with a false quantity, and go on stumbling with the same infirmity. The epigram on More, the defender of Salmasius, is without wit: the pun is very poor. The next piece, a fable of the Farmer and Master, is equally vapid. But now comes the *Bellipotens Virgo*, of which we often have spoken, but of which no one ever spoke too highly. Christina was flighty and insane; but it suited the policy of Cromwell to flatter a queen almost as vain as Elizabeth, who could still command the veterans of Gustavus Adolphus. We will pass over the Greek verses. They are such as no boy of the sixth form would venture to show up in any of our public schools. We have only one Alcaic ode in the volume, and a very bad one it is. The canons of this metre[11] were unknown in Milton's time. But, versed as he was in mythology, he never should have written—

Nec puppe lustrâsses Charontis
Horribiles *barathri* recessus.

The good Doctor Goslyn was not rowed in that direction, nor could any such place be discovered from the bark of Charon, from whom Dr Goslyn had every right, as Vice-Chancellor of the University, to expect civility and attention.

Southey. We come now to a longer poem, and in heroic verse, on the *Gunpowder Plot.* It appears to me to be even more Ovidian than the *Elegies.* Monstrosus Typhoeus, Mavortigena Quirinus, the Pope, and the mendicant friars meet strangely. However, here they are; and now comes Saint Peter, and Bromius.

[11 Landor is referring to the faulty form used by Milton in the third line of the Archaic stanza. Five out of the twelve are incorrect.]

Landor.

Hic Dolus intortis semper sedet ater *ocellis*.

Though *ocellus* is often used for *oculus*, being a diminutive, it is, if not always a word of endearment, yet never applicable to what is terrific or heroic. In the 163d verse the Pope is represented as declaring the Protestant religion to be the true one.

Et quotquot fidei caluere cupidine veræ.

This poem, which ends poorly, is a wonderful work for a boy of seventeen, although much less so than Chatterton's *Bristowe Tragedie* and *Ælia*.

Southey. I suspect you will be less an admirer of the next, on *Obitum Præulis Elienses*,—

[13.] Qui rex sacrorum illâ fuisti in insulâ
Quæ nomen Anguillæ tenet,

—where he wishes Death were dead.

[24.] *Et imprecor neci necem.*

Again,—

[43.] Sub regna furvi luctuosa Tartari
Sedesque subterraneas.

Landor. He never has descended before to such a bathos as this, where he runs against the coming blackamoor in the dark. However, he recovers from the momentary stupefaction; and there follow twenty magnificent verses, such as Horace himself, who excels in this metre, never wrote in it. But the next, *Naturam non pati senium*, is still more admirable. I wish only he had omitted the third verse.

Heu quàm perpetuis erroribus acta fatiscit
Avia mens hominum, tenebrisque immersa profundis
Œdipodioniam volvit sub pectore noctem.

Sublime as *volvit sub pectore noctem* is, the lumbering and ill-composed word, *Œdipodioniam*, spoils it. Beside, the sentence would go on very well, omitting the whole line. Gray has much less vigor and animation in the fragment of his philosophical poem. Robert Smith alone has more,—how much more!

Enough to rival Lucretius in his noblest passages, and to deter the most aspiring from an attempt at Latin poetry. The next is also on a philosophical subject, and entitled, *De Idea Platonica quemadmodum Aristoteles intellexit.* This is obscure. Aristoteles *knew*, as others do, that Plato entertained the whimsy of God working from an archetype; but he himself was too sound and solid for the admission of such a notion. The first five verses are highly poetical; the sixth is Cowleian. At the close, he scourges Plato for playing the fool so extravagantly, and tells him either to recall the poets he has turned out of doors, or to go out himself. There are people who look up in astonishment at this *archetypus gigas*, frightening God while he works at him. Milton has invested him with great dignity, and slips only once into the poetical corruptions of the age.

Southey. Lover as you are of Milton, how highly must you be gratified by the poem he addresses to his father!

Landor. I am happy, remote as we are, to think of the pleasure so good a father must have felt on this occasion, and how clearly he must have seen in prospective the glory of his son.

In the verses after the forty-second,—

> Carmina regales epulas ornare solebant,
> Cum nondum luxus vastæque immensa vorago
> Nota gulæ, et modico fumabat cœna Lyæo,
> Tum de more sedens festa ad convivia vates, &c.

I wish he had omitted the two intermediate lines, and had written,—

> Carmina regales epulas ornare solebant,
> Cum, de more, &c.

The four toward the conclusion,—

> At tibi, chare pater, &c.

—must have gratified the father as much almost by the harmony as the sentiment.

Southey. The scazons to Salsilli are a just and equitable return for his quatrain; for they are full of false quantities, without an iota of poetry.

Landor. But how gloriously he bursts forth again in all his

splendor for Manso!—for Manso, who before had enjoyed the immortal honor of being the friend of Tasso!

[70.] Diis dilecte senex! te Jupiter æquus oportet
Nascentem et miti lustrârit lumine Phœbus,
Atlantisque nepos; *neque enim nisi charus ab ortu.*
Diis superis poterit magno favisse poetæ.

And the remainder of the poem is highly enthusiastic. What a glorious verse is,—

[84.] Frangam Saxonicas Britonum sub Marte phalanges!

Southey. I have often wondered that our poets, and Milton more especially, should be the partisans of the Britons rather than of the Saxons. I do not add the Normans; for very few of our poets are Norman by descent. The Britons seem to have been a barbarous and treacherous race, inclined to drunkenness and quarrels. Was the whole nation ever worth this noble verse of Milton? It seems to come sounding over the Ægean Sea, and not to have been modulated on the low country of the Tiber.

Landor. In his pastoral on the loss of Diodati, entitled *Epitaphium Damonis*, there are many beautiful verses: for instance,—

[66.] Ovium quoque tædet, at illæ
Mœrent, inque suum convertunt ora magistrum.

The pause at *mœrent*, and the word also, show the great master. In Virgil himself it is impossible to find anything more scientific. Here, as in *Lycidas*, mythologies are intermixed, and the heroic bursts forth from the pastoral. Apollo could not for ever be disguised as the shepherd-boy of Admetus.

[60.] Supra caput imber et Eurus
Triste sonant, *fractæque agitata crepuscula sylvæ.*

Southey. This is finely expressed; but he found the idea not untouched before. Gray and others have worked upon it since. It may be well to say little on the *Presentation of the poems to the Bodleian Library*. Strophes and antistrophes are here quite out of place; and on no occasion has any Latin poet

so jumbled together the old metres. Many of these are irregular and imperfect.

[60.] *Ion* Acteâ genitus Creusâ

is not a verse; *authorum* is not Latin.

[78.] Et tutela dabit *sŏlers* Roüsi

is defective in metre. This Pindaric ode to Rouse, the librarian, is indeed fuller of faults than any other of his Latin compositions. He tells us himself that he has admitted a spondee for the third foot in the Phalæcian verse, because Catullus had done so in the second. He never wrote such bad verses, or gave such bad reasons, all his life before. But beautifully and justly has he said,—

[86.] Si quid meremur sana posteritas sciet.

Landor. I find traces in Milton of nearly all the best Latin poets, excepting Lucretius. This is singular; for there is in both of them a generous warmth and a contemptuous severity. I admire and love Lucretius. There is about him a simple majesty, a calm and lofty scorn of every thing pusillanimous and abject; and, consistently with this character, his poetry is masculine, plain, concentrated, and energetic. But since invention was precluded by the subject, and glimpses of imagination could be admitted through but few and narrow apertures, it is the insanity of enthusiasm to prefer his poetical powers to those of Virgil, of Catullus, and of Ovid; in all of whom every part of what constitutes the true poet is much more largely displayed. The excellence of Lucretius is, that his ornaments are never out of place, and are always to be found wherever there is a place for them. Ovid knows not what to do with his, and is as fond of accumulation as the frequenter of auction-rooms. He is playful so out of season, that he reminds me of a young lady I saw at Sta. Maria Novella, who at one moment crossed herself, and at the next tickled her companion; by which process they were both put upon their speed at their prayers, and made very good and happy. Small as is the portion of glory which accrues to Milton from his Latin poetry, there are single sentences in it, ay, single images, worth all that our island had produced

before. In all the volume of Buchanan, I doubt whether you can discover a glimpse of poetry; and few sparks fly off the anvil of May.

There is a confidence of better days expressed in this closing poem. Enough is to be found in his Latin to insure him a high rank and a lasting name. It is, however, to be regretted that late in life he ran back to the treasures of his youth, and estimated them with the fondness of that undiscerning age. No poet ever was sorry that he abstained from early publication. But Milton seems to have cherished his first effusions with undue partiality. Many things written later by him are unworthy of preservation, especially those which exhibit men who provoked him into bitterness. Hatred, the most vulgar of vulgarisms, could never have belonged to his natural character. He must have contracted the distemper from theologians and critics. The scholar in his days was half clown and half trooper. College life could leave but few of its stains and incrustations on a man who had stepped forward so soon into the amenities of Italy, and had conversed so familiarly with the most polished gentlemen of the most polished nation.

Southey. In his attacks on Salmasius, and others more obscure, he appears to have mistaken his talent in supposing he was witty.

Landor. Is there a man in the world wise enough to know whether he himself is witty or not, to the extent he aims at? I doubt whether any question needs more self-examination. It is only the fool's heart that is at rest upon it. He never asks how the matter stands, and feels confident he has only to stoop for it. Milton's dough, it must be acknowledged, is never the lighter for the bitter barm he kneads up with it.

Southey. The Sabbath of his mind required no levities,—no excursions or amusements. But he was not ill-tempered. The worst-tempered men have often the greatest and readiest store of pleasantries. Milton, on all occasions indignant and wrathful at injustice, was unwilling to repress the signification of it when it was directed against himself. However I can hardly think he felt so much as he expresses; but he seized on bad models in his resolution to show his scholarship. Disputants, and critics in particular, followed one another with invectives; and he was thought to have given the most manifest proof of original genius

who had invented a new form of reproach. I doubt if Milton was so contented with his discomfiture of Satan, or even with his creation of Eve, as with the overthrow of Salmasius under the loads of fetid brimstone he fulminated against him.

It is fortunate we have been sitting quite alone while we detected the blemishes of a poet we both venerate. The malicious are always the most ready to bring forward an accusation of malice; and we should certainly have been served, before long, with a writ pushed under the door.

Landor. Are we not somewhat like two little beggar-boys, who, forgetting that they are in tatters, sit noticing a few stains and rents in their father's raiment?

Southey. But they love him.

Let us now walk homeward. We leave behind us the Severn and the sea and the mountains; and, if smaller things may be mentioned so suddenly after greater, we leave behind us the sun-dial, which marks, as we have been doing in regard to Milton, the course of the great luminary by a slender line of shadow.

Landor. After witnessing his glorious ascension, we are destined to lower our foreheads over the dreary hydropathy and flannelly voices of the swathed and sinewless.

Southey. Do not be over-sure that you are come to the worst, even there. Unless you sign a certificate of their health and vigor, your windows and lamps may be broken by the mischievous rabble below.

Landor. Marauders will cook their greens and bacon, though they tear down cedar panels for the purpose.

Southey. There is an incessant chatterer[12] who has risen to the first dignities of State by the same means as nearly all men rise now by; namely, opposition to whatever is done or projected by those invested with authority. He will never allow us to contemplate greatness at our leisure: he will not allow us indeed to look at it for a moment. Cæsar must be stripped of his laurels and left bald; or some reeling soldier, some insolent swaggerer, some stilted ruffian, thrust before his triumph. If he fights, he does not know how to use his sword; if he speaks, he speaks vile Latin. I wonder that Cromwell fares no better; for he lived a hypocrite, and he died a traitor. I should not recall to you this

[12] Lord Brougham.]

ridiculous man, to whom the Lords have given *the run of the House*, —a man pushed off his chair by every party he joins, and enjoying all the disgraces he incurs,—were it not that he has also, in the fulness of his impudence, raised his cracked voice and incondite language against Milton.

Landor. I hope his dapple fellow-creatures in the lanes will be less noisy and more modest as we pass along them homeward.

Southey. Wretched as he is in composition, superficial as he is in all things, without a glimmer of genius or a grain of judgment, yet his abilities and acquirements raise him somewhat high above those more quiescent and unaspiring ones you call his fellow-creatures.

Landor. The main difference is, that they are subject to have their usual burdens laid upon them all their lives, while his of the woolsack is taken off for ever. The allusion struck me from the loudness and dissonance of his voice, the wilfulness and perverseness of his disposition, and his habitude of turning round on a sudden and kicking up behind.

XIX. ANDREW MARVEL AND BISHOP PARKER.[1] *

Parker. Most happy am I to encounter you, Mr Marvel. It is some time, I think, since we met. May I take the liberty

[1 The Controversy, of which the *Rehearsal Transprosed* was part, began with three books written by Dr Parker, "the most sanguine hound of the clerical pack, who seemed to have a mitre in his eye" (Thompson's "Life of Marvel," iii., 470). These were *Ecclesiastical Polity* (1670), *A Defence of Ecclesiastical Polity* (1671), and *A Preface to a Reprint of Bishop Bramhall's Vindication of himself and the rest of the Episcopal Clergy from the charge of Popery* (1672). Marvel's book was an attack on all three. Dr Parker retorted with a *Reproof to the Rehearsal Transprosed*, which provoked the second part of the *Rehearsal Transprosed* from which (p. 498, Thompson ed.) Landor has quoted the passage given in the note below. He has, however, omitted several words, and curiously enough, one passage,

* He wrote a work entitled, as Hooker's was, *Ecclesiastical Polity*, in which are these words: "It is better to submit to the unreasonable impositions of Nero and Caligula than to hazard the dissolution of the

of inquiring what brought you into such a lonely quarter as Bunhillfields?

Marvel. My lord, I return at this instant from visiting an

in which Marvel denies that he was ever on friendly terms with Parker. In Captain Thompson's Life (p. 474) an account is given of one conversation between Marvel and Parker, which was not likely to have led to another. Parker was not made bishop of Oxford until some years after Marvel's death. The full text of the passage quoted by Landor is as follows: "At His Majesty's happy return, J. M. did partake, even as you yourself did for all your huffing, of his regal clemency, and has ever since expiated himself in a retired silence. It was after that, I well remember it, that being one day at his house, I there first met you, and accidentally. Since that I have been scarce four or five times in your company, but, whether it were my foresight or my good fortune, I never contracted any friendship or confidence with you. But then it was, when you, as I told you, wandered up and down Moorfields, astrologizing upon the duration of His Majesty's government, that you frequented J. M. incessantly, and haunted his house day by day. What discourses you there used he is too generous to remember. But, he never having in the least provoked you, for you to insult thus over his old age, to traduce him by your *scara muccios*, and in your own person, as a schoolmaster, who was born and hath lived much more ingenuously and liberally than yourself; to have done all this, and lay at last my simple book to his charge, without ever taking care to inform yourself better, which you had so easie opportunity to do; nay, when you yourself, too, have said, to my knowledge, that you saw no such great matter in it but that I might be the author: it is inhumanely and inhospitably done, and will, I hope, be a warning to all others, as it is to me, to avoid (I will not say such a Judas) but a man that creeps into all companies to jeer, trepan, and betray them." (Works, ii., 1846. Works, iv., 1876.)]

State." It is plain enough to what *impositions* he recommended the duty of submission; for, in our fiscal sense of the word, none ever bore more lightly on the subject than Caligula's and Nero's: even the provinces were taxed very moderately and fairly by them. He adds, "Princes may with less danger give liberty to men's vices and debaucheries than to their consciences." Marvel answered him in his *Rehearsal Transprosed*, in which he says of Milton: "I well remember that, being one day at his house, I there first met you, and accidentally. Then it was that you wandered up and down Moorfields, astrologizing upon the duration of His Majesty's government. You frequented John Milton incessantly, and haunted his house day by day. What discourses you there used he is too generous to remember; but, he never having in the least provoked you, it is inhumanely and inhospitably done to insult thus over his old age. I hope it will be a warning to all others, as it is to me, to avoid, I will not say such a Judas, but a man that creeps into all companies, to jeer, trepan, and betray them."

old friend of ours, hard by, in Artillery Walk; who, you will be happy to hear, bears his blindness and asthma with truly Christian courage.

Parker. And pray, who may that old friend be, Mr Marvel?

Marvel. Honest John Milton.

Parker. The same gentleman whose ingenious poem, on our first parents, you praised in some elegant verses prefixed to it?

Marvel. The same who likewise, on many occasions, merited and obtained your lordship's approbation.

Parker. I am happy to understand that no harsh measures were taken against him, on the return of our most gracious sovereign. And it occurs to me that you, Mr Marvel, were earnest in his behalf. Indeed, I myself might have stirred upon it, had Mr Milton solicited me in the hour of need.

Marvel. He is grateful to the friends who consulted at the same time his dignity and his safety; but gratitude can never be expected to grow on a soil hardened by solicitation. Those who are the most ambitious of power are often the least ambitious of glory. It requires but little sagacity to foresee that a name will become invested with eternal brightness by belonging to a benefactor of Milton. *I might have served him!* is not always the soliloquy of late compassion or of virtuous repentance: it is frequently the cry of blind and impotent and wounded pride, angry at itself for having neglected a good bargain, a rich reversion. Believe me, my lord bishop, there are few whom God has promoted to serve the truly great. They are never to be superseded, nor are their names to be obliterated in earth or heaven. Were I to trust my observation rather than my feelings, I should believe that friendship is only a state of transition to enmity. The wise, the excellent in honor and integrity, whom it was once our ambition to converse with, soon appear in our sight no higher than the ordinary class of our acquaintance; then become fit objects to set our own slender wits against, to contend with, to interrogate, to subject to the arbitration, not of their equals, but of ours; and, lastly,—what indeed is less injustice and less indignity,—to neglect, abandon, and disown.

Parker. I never have doubted that Mr Milton is a learned man,—indeed, he has proven it; and there are many who, like yourself, see considerable merit in his poems. I confess

that I am an indifferent judge in these matters; and I can only hope that he has now corrected what is erroneous in his doctrines.

Marvel. Latterly, he hath never changed a jot, in acting or thinking.

Parker. Wherein I hold him blamable, well aware as I am that never to change is thought an indication of rectitude and wisdom. But if every thing in this world is progressive; if every thing is defective; if our growth, if our faculties, are obvious and certain signs of it,—then surely we should and must be different in different ages and conditions. Consciousness of error is, to a certain extent, a consciousness of understanding; and correction of error is the plainest proof of energy and mastery.

Marvel. No proof of the kind is necessary to my friend; and it was not always that your lordship looked down on him so magisterially in reprehension, or delivered a sentence from so commanding an elevation. I, who indeed am but a humble man, am apt to question my judgment where it differs from his. I am appalled by any supercilious glance at him, and disgusted by any austerity ill assorted with the generosity of his mind. When I consider what pure delight we have derived from it, what treasures of wisdom it has conveyed to us, I find him supremely worthy of my gratitude, love, and veneration; and the neglect in which I now discover him leaves me only the more room for the free effusion of these sentiments. How shallow in comparison is every thing else around us, trickling and dimpling in the pleasure-grounds of our literature! If we are to build our summer-houses against ruined temples, let us at least abstain from ruining them for the purpose.

Parker. Nay, nay, Mr Marvel! so much warmth is uncalled for.

Marvel. Is there any thing offensive to your lordship in my expressions?

Parker. I am not aware that there is. But let us generalize a little; for we are prone to be touchy and testy in favor of our intimates.

Marvel. I believe, my lord, this fault, or sin, or whatsoever it may be designated, is among the few that are wearing fast away.

Parker. Delighted am I, my dear sir, to join you in your innocent pleasantry. But, truly and seriously, I have known even the prudent grow warm and stickle about some close affinity.

Marvel. Indeed! so indecorous before your lordship?

Parker. We may remember when manners were less polite than they are now; and not only the seasons of life require an alteration of habits, but likewise the changes of society.

Marvel. Your lordship acts up to your tenets.

Parker. Perhaps you may blame me, and more severely than I would blame our worthy friend Mr John Milton, upon finding a slight variation in my exterior manner, and somewhat more reserve than formerly; yet wiser and better men than I presume to call myself have complied with the situation to which it hath pleased the Almighty to exalt them.

Marvel. I am slow to censure any one for assuming an air and demeanor which, he is persuaded, are more becoming than what he has left off. And I subscribe to the justice of the observation, that wiser and better men than your lordship have adapted their language and their looks to elevated station. But sympathy is charity, or engenders it; and sympathy requires proximity, closeness, contact; and at every remove, and more especially at every gradation of ascent, it grows a little colder. When we begin to call a man our *worthy friend*, our friendship is already on the wane. In him who has been raised above his old companions, there seldom remains more warmth than what turns every thing about it vapid: familiarity sidles towards affability, and kindness courtesies into condescension.

Parker. I see, we are hated for rising.

Marvel. Many do really hate others for rising; but some, who appear to hate them for it, hate them only for the bad effects it produces on the character.

Parker. We are odious, I am afraid, sometimes for the gift, and sometimes for the giver; and malevolence cools her throbs by running to the obscurity of neglected merit. We know whose merit that means.

Marvel. What! because the servants of a king have stamped no measure above a certain compass, and such only as the vulgar are accustomed to handle, must we disbelieve the existence of any

greater in its capacity, or decline the use of it in things lawful and commendable? Little men like these have no business at all with the mensuration of higher minds: gaugers are not astronomers.

Parker. Really, Mr Marvel, I do not understand metaphors.

Marvel. Leaving out arithmetic and mathematics, and the sciences appertaining to them, I never opened a page without one: no, not even a title-page with a dozen words in it. Perhaps I am unfortunate in my tropes and figures: perhaps they come, by my want of dexterity, too near your lordship. I would humbly ask, Is there any criminality in the calculation and casting up of manifold benefits, or in the employment of those instruments by which alone they are to be calculated and cast up?

Parker. Surely none whatever.

Marvel. It has happened to me and my schoolfellows, that, catching small fish in the shallows and ditches of the Humber, we called a minnow a perch, and a dace a pike; because they pleased us in the catching, and because we really were ignorant of their quality. In like manner do some older ones act in regard to men. They who are caught and handled by them are treated with distinction, because they are so caught and handled, and because self-love and self-conceit dazzle and delude the senses; while those whom they neither can handle nor catch are without a distinctive name. We are informed by Aristoteles, in his *Treatise on Natural History*, that solid horns are dropped and that hollow ones are permanent. Now, although we may find solid men cast on the earth and hollow men exalted, yet never will I believe in the long duration of the hollow, or in the long abasement of the solid. Milton, although the generality may be ignorant of it, is quite as great a genius as Bacon, bating the chancellorship, which goes for little where a great man is estimated by a wise one.

Parker. Rather enthusiastic! ay, Mr Marvel!—the one name having been established for almost a century, the other but recently brought forward, and but partially acknowledged. By coming so much later into the world, he cannot be quite so original in his notions as Lord Verulam.

Marvel. Solomon said that, even in his time, there was nothing new under the sun: he said it unwisely and untruly.

Parker. Solomon? untruly? unwisely?

Marvel. The spectacles which, by the start you gave, had so nearly fallen from the bridge of your nose, attest it. Had *he* any? It is said, and apparently with more reason than formerly, that there are no new thoughts. What do the fools mean who say it! They might just as well assert that there are no new men, because other men existed before with eyes, mouth, nostrils, chin, and many other appurtenances. But as there are myriads of forms between the forms of Scarron and Hudson * on one side, and of Mercury and Apollo on the other, so there are myriads of thoughts, of the same genus, each taking its peculiar conformation. Æschylus and Racine, struck by the same idea, would express a sentiment very differently. Do not imagine that the idea is the thought: the idea is that which the thought generates, rears up to maturity, and calls after its own name. Every note in music has been sounded frequently; yet a composition of Purcell may be brilliant by its novelty. There are extremely few roots in a language; yet the language may be varied, and novel too, age after age. Chessboards and numerals are less capable of exhibiting new combinations than poetry; and prose likewise is equally capable of displaying new phases and phenomena in images and reflections. Good prose, to say nothing of the original thoughts it conveys, may be infinitely varied in modulation. It is only an extension of metres, an amplification of harmonies, of which even the best and most varied poetry admits but few. Comprehending at once the prose and poetry of Milton, we could prove, before "fit audience," that he is incomparably the greatest master of harmony that ever lived.

There may be, even in these late days, more originality of thought, and flowing in more channels of harmony, more bursts and breaks and sinuosities, than we have yet discovered. The admirers of Homer never dreamed that a man more pathetic, more sublime, more thoughtful, more imaginative, would follow.

Parker. Certainly not.

Marvel. Yet Shakspeare came, in the memory of our fathers.

Parker. Mr William Shakspeare, of Stratford upon Avon? A remarkably clever man: nobody denies it.

Marvel. At first, people did not know very well what to

* A dwarf in that age.

make of him. He looked odd; he seemed witty; he drew tears. But a grin and a pinch of snuff can do that.

Every great author is a great reformer; and the reform is either in thought or language. Milton is zealous and effective in both.

Parker. Some men conceive that, if their name is engraven in Gothic letters, it signifies and manifests antiquity of family; and others, that a congestion of queer words and dry chopped sentences, which turn the mouth awry in reading, make them look like original thinkers. I have seen fantastical folks of this description who write *wend* instead of *go*, and are so ignorant of grammar as even to put *wended* for *went*. I do not say that Mr Milton is one of them; but he may have led weak men into the fault.

Marvel. Not only is he not one of them, but his language is never a patchwork of old and new: all is of a piece. Beside, he is the only writer whom it is safe to follow in spelling: others are inconsistent; some for want of learning, some for want of reasoning, some for want of memory, and some for want of care. But there are certain words which ceased to be spelled properly just before his time: the substantives *childe* and *wilde*, and the verbs *finde* and *winde*, for instance.

Parker. Therein we agree. We ought never to have deviated from those who delivered to us our Litany, of which the purity is unapproachable and the harmony complete. Our tongue has been drooping ever since.

Marvel. Until Milton touched it again with fire from heaven.

Parker. Gentlemen seem now to have delegated the correction of the press to their valets, and the valets to have devolved it on the chambermaids. But I would not advise you to start a fresh reformation in this quarter; for the Roundheads can't spell, and the Royalists won't; and, if you bring back an ancient form retaining all its beauty, they will come forward from both sides against you on a charge of coining. We will now return, if you please, to the poets we were speaking of. Both Mr Shakspeare and Mr Milton have considerable merit in their respective ways; but both, surely, are unequal. Is it not so, Mr Marvel?

Marvel. Under the highest of their immeasurable Alps, all is not valley and verdure: in some places, there are frothy cataracts, there are the fruitless beds of noisy torrents, and there are dull and hollow glaciers. He must be a bad writer, or however a very indifferent one, in whom there are no inequalities. The plants of such table-land are diminutive, and never worth gathering. What would you think of a man's eyes to which all things appear of the same magnitude and at the same elevation? You must think nearly so of a writer who makes as much of small things as of great. The vigorous mind has mountains to climb and valleys to repose in. Is there any sea without its shoals? On that which the poet navigates, he rises intrepidly as the waves rise round him, and sits composedly as they subside.

Parker. I can listen to this; but where the authority of Solomon is questioned and rejected, I must avoid the topic. Pardon me; I collect from what you threw out previously, that, with strange attachments and strange aversions, you cherish singular ideas about greatness.

Marvel. To pretermit all reference to myself, our evil humors, and our good ones too, are brought out whimsically. We are displeased by him who would be similar to us, or who would be near, unless he consent to walk behind. To-day we are unfriendly to a man of genius, whom ten days hence we shall be zealous in extolling,—not because we know any thing more of his works or his character, but because we have dined in his company and he has desired to be introduced to us. A flat ceiling seems to compress those animosities which flame out furiously under the open sky.

Parker. Sad prejudices! sad infirmities!

Marvel. The sadder are opposite to them. Usually men, in distributing fame, do as old maids and old misers do: they give every thing to those who want nothing. In literature, often a man's solitude, and oftener his magnitude, disinclines us from helping him if we find him down. We are fonder of warming our hands at a fire already in a blaze than of blowing one. I should be glad to see some person as liberal of fame in regard to Milton as in regard to those literators of the town who speedily run it out.

Parker. I have always called him a man of parts. But, Mr Marvel, we may bestow as injudiciously as we detract.

Marvel. Perhaps as injudiciously, certainly not as injuriously. If indeed we are to be called to account for the misapplication of our bestowals, a heavy charge will lie against me for an action I committed in my journey hither from Hull. I saw an old man working upon the road, who was working upon the same road, and not far from the same spot, when I was first elected to represent that city in Parliament. He asked me for *something to make him drink ;* which, considering the heat of the weather and the indication his nose exhibited of his propensities, did appear superfluous. However, I gave him a shilling, in addition to as many good wishes as he had given me.

Parker. Not reflecting that he would probably get intoxicated with it?

Marvel. I must confess I had all that reflection, with its whole depth of shade, upon my conscience; and I tried as well as I could to remove the evil. I inquired of him whether he was made the happier by the shilling. He answered, that, if I was none the worse for it, he was none. "Then," said I, "honest friend! since two are already the happier, prythee try whether two more may not become so: therefore, drink out of it at supper with thy two best friends."

Parker. I would rather have advised frugality and laying-by. Perhaps he might have had a wife and children.

Marvel. He could not then, unless he were a most unlucky man, be puzzled in searching for his two best friends. My project gave him more pleasure than my money; and I was happy to think that he had many hours for his schemes and anticipations between him and sunset.

Parker. When I ride or walk, I never carry loose money about me, lest, through an inconsiderate benevolence, I be tempted in some such manner to misapply it. To be robbed would give me as little or less concern.

Marvel. A man's self is often his worst robber. He steals from his own bosom and heart what God has there deposited, and he hides it out of his way, as dogs and foxes do with bones. But the robberies we commit on the body of our superfluities, and store up in vacant places,—in places of poverty and sorrow,—

these, whether in the dark or in the daylight leave us neither in nakedness nor in fear, are marked by no burning-iron of conscience, are followed by no scourge of reproach; they never deflower prosperity, they never distemper sleep.

Parker. I am ready at all times to award justice to the generosity of your character, and no man ever doubted its consistency. Believing you to be at heart a loyal subject, I am thrown back on the painful reflection that all our acquaintance are not equally so. Mr Milton, for example, was a republican; yet he entered into the service of a usurper; you disdained it.

Marvel. Events proved that my judgment of Cromwell's designs was correcter than his; but the warier man is not always the wiser, nor the more active and industrious in the service of his country.

Parker. His opinions on religion varied also considerably, until at last the vane almost wore out the socket, and it could turn no longer.

Marvel. Is it nothing in the eyes of an Anglican bishop to have carried the gospel of Christ against the Talmudists of Rome; the word of God against the traditions of men; the liberty of conscience against the conspiracy of tyranny and fraud? If so, then the Protector,—such was Milton,—not of England only, but of Europe, was nothing.

Parker. You are warm, Mr Marvel.

Marvel. Not by any addition to my cloth, however.

Parker. He hath seceded, I hear, from every form of public worship; and doubts are entertained whether he believes any longer in the co-equality of the Son with the Father, or indeed in his atonement for our sins. Such being the case, he forfeits the name and privileges of a Christian.

Marvel. Not with Christians, if they know that he keeps the ordinances of Christ. Papists, Calvinists, Lutherans, and every other kind of scoria, exploding in the furnace of zeal, and cracking off from Christianity, stick alike to the side of this gloomy, contracted, and unwholesome doctrine. But the steadiest believer in the divinity of our Lord, and in his atonement for us, if pride, arrogance, persecution, malice, lust of station, lust of money, lust of power, inflame him, is incomparably less a Christian than he who doubteth all that ever was doubted of his genealogy

and hereditary rights, yet who never swerveth from his commandments. A wise man will always be a Christian, because the perfection of wisdom is to know where lies tranquillity of mind, and how to attain it, which Christianity teaches; but men equally wise may differ and diverge on the sufficiency of testimony, and still farther on matters which no testimony can affirm and no intellect comprehend. To strangle a man because he has a narrow swallow, shall never be inserted among the "infallible cures," in my *Book of Domestic Remedies*.

Parker. We were talking gravely: were it not rather more seemly to continue in the same strain, Mr Marvel?

Marvel. I was afraid that my gravity might appear too specific; but, with your lordship's permission and exhortation, I will proceed in serious reflections,—to which indeed, on this occasion, I am greatly more inclined. Never do I take the liberty to question or examine any man on his religion, or to look over his shoulder on his account-book with his God. But I know that Milton, and every other great poet, must be religious; for there is nothing so godlike as a love of order, with a power of bringing great things into it. This power,—unlimited in the one, limited (but incalculably and inconceivably great) in the other,—belongs to the Deity and the poet.

Parker. I shudder.

Marvel. Wherefore? at seeing a man what he was designed to be by his Maker,—his Maker's image? But pardon me, my lord! the surprise of such a novelty is enough to shock you.

Reserving to myself for a future time the liberty of defending my friend on theology, in which alone he shifted his camp, I may remark what has frequently happened to me. I have walked much: finding one side of the road miry, I have looked toward the other and thought it cleaner; I have then gone over, and when there I have found it just as bad, although it did not seem nearly so, until it was tried. This, however, has not induced me to wish that the overseer would bar it up; but only to wish that both sides were mended effectually with smaller and more binding materials, not with large loose stones, nor with softer stuff, soon converted into mud.

Parker. Stability, then, and consistency are the qualities most desirable; and these I look for in Mr Milton. However fond

he was of Athenian terms and practices, he rejected them after he had proved them.

Marvel. It was not in his choice to reject or establish. He saw the nation first cast down and lacerated by fanaticism, and then utterly exhausted by that quieter blood-sucker, hypocrisy. A powerful arm was wanted to drive away such intolerable pests, and it could not but be a friendly one. Cromwell and the saner part of the nation were unanimous in beating down Presbyterianism, which had assumed the authority of the Papacy without its lenity.

Parker. He, and those saner people, had subverted already the better form of Christianity which they found in the Anglican church. Your Samson had shaken its pillars by his attack on prelaty.

Marvel. He saw the prelates, in that reign, standing as ready there as anywhere to wave the censer before the king, and under its smoke to hide the people from him. He warned them as an angel would have done,—nay, as our Saviour has done,—that the wealthy and the proud, the flatterer at the palace and the flatterer at the altar, in short, the man for the world, is not the man for heaven.

Parker. We must lay gentle constructions and liberal interpretations on the Scriptures.

Marvel. Then let us never open them. If they are true, we should receive them as they are; if they are false, we should reject them totally. We cannot pick and choose: we cannot say to the Omniscient, "We think you right here; we think you wrong there; however, we will meet you halfway, and talk it over with you." This is such impiety as shocks us even in saying we must avoid it; yet our actions tend to its countenance and support. We clothe the ministers of Christ in the same embroidery as was worn by the proudest of his persecutors, and they mount into Pilate's chair. The Reformation has effected little more than melting down the gold lace of the old wardrobe, to make it enter the pocket more conveniently.

Parker. Who would have imagined Mr John Milton should ever have become a seceder and sectarian?—he who, after the days of adolescence, looked with an eye of fondness on the idle superstitions of our forefathers, and celebrated them in his poetry!

Marvel. When superstitions are only idle, it is wiser to look on them kindly than unkindly. I have remarked that those which serve best for poetry have more plumage than talon, and those which serve best for policy have more talon than plumage. Milton never countenanced priestcraft, never countenanced fraud and fallacy.

Parker. The business is no easy one to separate devotion from practices connected with it. There is much that may seem useless, retained through ages in an intermixture with what is better; and the better would never have been so good as it is, if you had cast away the rest. What is chaff when the grain is threshed was useful to the grain before its threshing.

Marvel. Since we are come unaware on religion, I would entreat of your lordship to enlighten me, and thereby some others of weak minds and tender consciences, in regard to the criminality of pretence to holiness.

Parker. The Lord abominates, as you know, Mr Marvel, from the Holy Scriptures, all hypocrisy.

Marvel. If we make ourselves or others who are not holy seem holy, are we worthy to enter his kingdom?

Parker. No; most unworthy.

Marvel. What if we set up, not only for good men, but for exquisitely religious, such as violate the laws and religion of the country?

Parker. Pray, Mr Marvel, no longer waste your time and mine in such idle disquisitions. We have beheld such men lately, and abominate them.

Marvel. Happily for the salvation of our souls, as I conceive, we never went so far as to induce, much less to authorize, much less to command, any one to fall down and worship them.

Parker. Such insolence and impudence would have brought about the blessed Restoration much earlier.

Marvel. We are now come to the point. It seems wonderful to pious and considerate men, unhesitating believers in God's holy word, that although the Reformation under his guidance was brought about by the prayers and fasting of the bishops, and others well deserving the name of saints, chiefly of the

equestrian order, no place in the calendar hath ever been assigned to them.

Parker. Perhaps, as there were several, a choice might have seemed particular and invidious. Perhaps, also, the names of many as excellent having been removed from the rubric, it was deemed unadvisable to inaugurate them.

Marvel. Yet, my lord bishop, we have inserted Charles the Martyr. Now, there have been saints not martyrs, but no martyr not a saint.

Parker. Do you talk in this manner,—you who had the manliness to praise his courage and constancy to Cromwell's face?

Marvel. Cromwell was not a man to undervalue the courage and constancy of an enemy; and, had he been, I should have applauded one in his presence. But how happens it that the bishops, priests, and deacons throughout England treat Charles as a saint and martyr, and hold his death-day sacred, who violated those ecclesiastical ordinances the violation whereof you would not only reprobate in another, but visit with exemplary punishment? Charles was present at plays in his palace on the Sabbath. Was he a saint in his lifetime; or only after his death? If in his lifetime, the single miracle performed by him was to act against his established church without a diminution of holiness. If only in his death, he holds his canonization by a different tenure from any of his blessed predecessors.

It is curious and sorrowful that Charles the Martyr should have suffered death on the scaffold for renewing the custom of arbitrary loans and forced benevolences, which the usurper Richard III. abolished. Charles, to be sure, had the misfortune to add the practice of torture and mutilation, to which those among the English who are most exposed to it bear a great dislike. Being a martyr, he is placed above the saints in dignity: they tortured only themselves.

Parker. Let me bring to your recollection, that plays were not prohibited on the Sabbath by our great Reformers.

Marvel. But if it is un-Christianlike now, it was then; and a saint must have been aware of it, although it escaped a reformer.

Parker. You scoff, Mr Marvel! I never answer the scoffer.

Marvel. I will now be serious. Is the canonization of Charles the effect of a firm conviction that he was holier than all those ejected from the calendar; or is it merely an ebullition of party-spirit, an ostentatious display of triumphant spite against his enemies? In this case,—and there are too many and too cogent reasons for believing it,—would it not be wiser never to have exhibited to the scrutinizing Church of Rome a *consecration* more reprehensible than the former *desecrations?* Either you must acknowledge that saints are not always to be followed in their practices, or you must allow men, women, and children to dance and frequent the playhouses on Sundays, as our martyr did before he took to mutilating and maiming; and he never left off the custom by his own free-will.

Parker. I think, Mr Marvel, you might safely leave these considerations to us.

Marvel. Very safely, my lord! for you are perfectly sure never to meddle with them: you are sure to leave them as they are,—solely from the pious motive that there may be peace in our days, according to the Litany. On such a principle, there have been many, and still perhaps there may be some remaining, who would not brush the dust from the bench, lest they should raise the moths and discover the unsoundness and corrosions. But there is danger lest the people at some future day should be wiser, braver, more inquisitive, more pertinacious: there is danger lest, on finding a notorious cheat and perjurer set up by Act of Parliament among the choice and sterling old saints, they undervalue not only saints but Parliaments.

Parker. I would rather take my ground where politics are unmingled with religion; and I see better reason to question the wisdom of Mr Milton than the wisdom of our most gracious King's privy council. We enjoy, thank God! liberty of conscience. I must make good my objection on the quarter of consistency, lest you think me resolute to find fault where there is none. Your friend continued to serve the Protector when he had reconstructed a House of Lords, which formerly he called an abomination.

Marvel. He never served Cromwell but when Cromwell served his country; and he would not abandon her defence for the worst wounds he had received in it. He was offended at the

renewal of that house, after all the labor and pains he had taken in its demolition; and he would have given his life, if one man's life could have paid for it, to throw down again so unshapely and darkening an obstruction. From his youth upward, he had felt the Norman rust entering into our very vitals; and he now saw that, if we had received from the bravest of nations a longer sword, we wore a heavier chain to support it. He began his *History* from a love of the Saxon institutions, than which the most enlightened nations had contrived none better; nor can we anywhere discover a worthier object for the meditations of a philosophical or for the energies of a poetical mind.

Parker. And yet you republicans are discontented even with this.

Marvel. We are not mere Saxons. A wise English republican will prefer (as having grown up with him) the Saxon institutions generally and mainly, both in spirit and practice, to those of Rome and Athens. But the Saxon institutions, however excellent, are insufficient. The moss must be rasped off the bark, and the bark itself must be slit, to let the plant expand. Nothing is wholesomer than milk from the udder; but would you always dine upon it? The seasons of growth, physical and intellectual, require different modes of preparation, different instruments of tillage, different degrees of warmth and excitement. Whatever is bad in our Constitution we derive from the Normans, or from the glosses put against the text under their Welsh and Scotch successors: the good is thrown back to us out of what was ours before. Our boasted Magna Charta is only one side of the old Saxon coat; and it is the side that has the broken loop-holes in it. It hangs loose, and at every breeze 'tis a hard matter to keep it on. In fact, the Magna Charta neither is, nor ever was long together, of much value to the body of the people. Our princes could always do what they wished to do, until lately; and this palladium was so light a matter that it was easily taken from the town-hall to the palace. It has been holden back or missing whenever the people most loudly called for it. Municipalities—in other words, small republics—are a nation's main-stay against aristocratical and regal encroachments.

Parker. If I speak in defence of the peerage, you may think me interested.

Marvel. Bring forward what may fairly recommend the institution, and I shall think you less interested than ingenious.

Parker. Yet surely you, who are well connected, cannot be insensible of the advantages it offers to persons of family.

Marvel. Is that any proof of its benefit to the public? And persons of family!—who are they? Between the titled man of ancient and the titled man of recent times, the difference, if any is in favor of the last. Suppose them both raised for merit (here indeed we do come to theory!), the benefits that society has received from him are nearer us. It is probable that many in the poor and abject are of very ancient families, and particularly in our county, where the contests of the York and Lancaster broke down, in many places, the high and powerful. Some of us may look back six or seven centuries, and find a stout ruffian at the beginning; but the great ancestor of the pauper, who must be somewhere, may stand perhaps far beyond.

Parker. If we ascend to the Tower of Babel, and come to the confusion of tongues, we come also to a confusion of ideas. A man of family, in all countries, is he whose ancestor attracted by some merit, real or imputed, the notice of those more eminent, who promoted him in wealth and station. Now, to say nothing of the humble, the greater part even of the gentry had no such progenitors.

Marvel. I look to a person of very old family as I do to any thing else that is very old; and I thank him for bringing to me a page of romance which probably he himself never knew or heard about. Usually, with all his pride and pretensions, he is much less conscious of the services his ancestor performed than my spaniel is of his own when he carries my glove or cane for me. I would pat them both on the head for it; and the civiler and more reasonable of the two would think himself well rewarded.

Parker. The additional name may light your memory to the national service.

Marvel. We extract this benefit from any ancient peer; this phosphorus, from a rotten post.

Parker. I do not complain or wonder that an irreligious man should be adverse not only to prelaty, but equally to a peerage.

Marvel. Herodotus tells us that among the Egyptians a herald was a herald because he was a herald's son, and not for the clear-

ness of his voice. He had told us before that the Egyptians were worshippers of cats and crocodiles; but he was too religious a man to sneer at that. It was an absurdity that the herald should hold his office for no better reason than because his father held it. Herodotus might peradventure have smiled within his sleeve at no other being given for the privileges of the peer; unless he thought a loud voice, which many do, more important than information and discretion.

Parker. You will find your opinions discountenanced by both our universities.

Marvel. I do not want anybody to corroborate my opinions. They keep themselves up by their own weight and consistency. Cambridge on one side and Oxford on the other could lend me no effectual support; and my skiff shall never be impeded by the sedges of Cam, nor grate on the gravel of Isis.

Parker. Mr Marvel, the path of what we fondly call patriotism is highly perilous. Courts at least are safe.

Marvel. I would rather stand on the ridge of Etna than lower my head in the Grotto del Cane. By the one I may share the fate of a philosopher; by the other I must suffer the death of a cur.

Parker. We are all of us dust and ashes.

Marvel. True, my lord; but in some we recognize the dust of gold and the ashes of the phœnix; in others, the dust of the gateway and the ashes of turf and stubble. With the greatest rulers upon earth, head and crown drop together, and are overlooked. It is true, we read of them in history; but we also read in history of crocodiles and hyænas. With great writers, whether in poetry or prose, what falls away is scarcely more or other than a vesture. The features of the man are imprinted on his works; and more lamps burn over them, and more religiously, than are lighted in temples or churches. Milton, and men like him, bring their own incense, kindle it with their own fire, and leave it unconsumed and unconsumable; and their music, by day and by night, swells along a vault commensurate with the vault of heaven.

Parker. Mr Marvel, I am admiring the extremely fine lace of your cravat.

Marvel. It cost me less than lawn would have done; and it

wins me a reflection. Very few can think that man a great man, whom they have been accustomed to meet, dressed exactly like themselves; more especially if they happen to find him, not in park, forest, or chase, but warming his limbs by the reflected heat of the bricks in Artillery Walk. In England, a man becomes a great man by living in the middle of a great field; in Italy, by living in a walled city; in France, by living in a courtyard: no matter what lives they lead there.

Parker. I am afraid, Mr Marvel, there is some slight bitterness in your observation.

Marvel. Bitterness, it may be, from the bruised laurel of Milton.

What falsehoods will not men put on, if they can only pad them with a little piety! And how few will expose their whole faces, from a fear of being frost-bitten by poverty! But Milton was among the few.

Parker. Already have we had our Deluge: we are now once more upon dry land again, and we behold the same creation as rejoiced us formerly. Our late gloomy and turbulent times are passed for ever.

Marvel. Perhaps they are, if anything is for ever; but the sparing Deluge may peradventure be commuted for unsparing fire, as we are threatened. The arrogant, the privileged, the stiff upholders of established wrong, the deaf opponents of equitable reformation, the lazy consumers of ill-requited industry, the fraudulent who, unable to stop the course of the sun, pervert the direction of the gnomon,—all these, peradventure, may be gradually consumed by the process of silent contempt, or suddenly scattered by the tempest of popular indignation. As we see in masquerades the real judge and the real soldier stopped and mocked by the fictitious, so do we see in the carnival of to-day the real man of dignity hustled, shoved aside, and derided by those who are invested with the semblance by the milliners of the court. The populace is taught to respect this livery alone, and is proud of being permitted to look through the grating at such ephemeral frippery. And yet false gems and false metals have never been valued above real ones. Until our people alter these notions; until they estimate the wise and virtuous above the silly and profligate, the man of

genius above the man of title; until they hold the knave and cheat of St James's as low as the knave and cheat of St Giles's,—they are fitter for the slave-market than for any other station.

Parker. You would have no distinctions, I fear.

Marvel. On the contrary, I would have greater than exist at present. You cannot blot or burn out an ancient name; you cannot annihilate past services; you cannot subtract one single hour from eternity, nor wither one leaf on his brow who hath entered into it. Sweep away from before me the soft grubs of yesterday's formation, generated by the sickliness of the plant they feed upon; sweep them away unsparingly,—then will you clearly see distinctions, and easily count the men who have attained them worthily.

Parker. In a want of respect to established power and principles, originated most of the calamities we have latterly undergone.

Marvel. Say rather, in the averseness of that power and the inadequacy of those principles to resist the encroachment of injustice; say rather, on their tendency to distort the poor creatures swaddled up in them; add, moreover, the reluctance of the old women who rock and dandle them to change their habiliments for fresh and wholesome ones. A man will break the windows of his own house, that he may not perish by foul air within; now, whether is he, or those who bolted the door on him, to blame for it? If he is called mad or inconsiderate, it is only by those who are ignorant of the cause and insensible of the urgency. I declare I am rejoiced at seeing a gentleman, whose ancestors have signally served their country, treated with deference and respect; because it evinces a sense of justice and of gratitude in the people, and because it may incite a few others, whose ambition would take another course, to desire the same. Different is my sentence, when he who has not performed the action claims more honor than he who performed it, and thinks himself the worthier if twenty are between them than if there be one or none. Still less accordant is it with my principles, and less reducible to my comprehension, that they who devised the ruin of cities and societies should be exhibited as deserving much higher distinction than they who have corrected the hearts

and enlarged the intellects, and have performed it not only without the hope of reward, but almost with the certainty of persecution.

Parker. Ever too hard upon great men, Mr Marvel!

Marvel. Little men in lofty places, who throw long shadows because our sun is setting,—the men so little and the places so lofty, that, casting my pebble, I only show where they stand. They would be less contented with themselves, if they had obtained their preferment honestly. Luck and dexterity always give more pleasure than intellect and knowledge; because they fill up what they fall on to the brim at once, and people run to them with acclamations at the splash. Wisdom is reserved and noiseless, contented with hard earnings, and daily letting go some early acquisition, to make room for better specimens. But great is the exultation of a worthless man, when he receives, for the chips and raspings of his Bridewell logwood, a richer reward than the best and wisest for extensive tracts of well-cleared truths; when he who has sold his country—

Parker. Forbear, forbear, good Mr Marvel!

Marvel. When such is higher in estimation than he who would have saved it; when his emptiness is heard above the voice that has shaken fanaticism in her central shrine, that hath bowed down tyrants to the scaffold, that hath raised up nations from the dust, that alone hath been found worthy to celebrate, as angels do, creating and redeeming Love, and to precede with its solitary sound the trumpet that will call us to our doom.

Parker. I am unwilling to feign ignorance of the gentleman you designate; but really now you would make a very Homer of him.

Marvel. It appears to me that Homer is to Milton what a harp is to an organ, though a harp under the hand of Apollo.

Parker. I have always done him justice: I have always called him a learned man.

Marvel. Call him henceforward the most glorious one that ever existed upon earth. If two—Bacon and Shakspeare—have equalled him in diversity and intensity of power, did either of these spring away with such resolution from the sublimest heights of genius, to liberate and illuminate with patient labor the manacled human race? And what is his recompence? The

same recompence as all men like him have received, and will receive for ages. Persecution follows righteousness: the Scorpion is next in succession to Libra. The fool, however, who ventures to detract from Milton's genius, in the night which now appears to close on him, will, when the dawn has opened on his dull ferocity, be ready to bite off a limb, if he might thereby limp away from the trap he has prowled into. Among the gentler, the better, and the wiser, few have entered yet the awful structure of his mind; few comprehend, few are willing to contemplate, its vastness. Politics now occupy scarcely a closet in it. We seldom are inclined to converse on them; and, when we do, it is jocosely rather than austerely. For even the bitterest berries grow less acrid when they have been hanging long on the tree. Beside, it is time to sit with our hats between our legs, since so many grave men have lately seen their errors, and so many brave ones have already given proofs enough of their bravery, and trip aside to lay down their laurels on gilt tables and velvet cushions. If my friend condemns any one now, it is Cromwell, and principally for reconstructing a hereditary house of peers. He perceives that it was done for the purpose of giving the aristocracy an interest in the perpetuation of power in his family, of which he discovered the folly just before his death. He derides the stupidity of those who bandy about the battered phrase of *useful checks and necessary counterpoises*. He would not desire a hindrance on his steward in the receipt of his rent, if he had any, nor on his attorney in prosecuting his suit; he would not recommend any interest in opposition to that of the people; he would not allow an honest man to be arrested and imprisoned for debt, while a dishonest one is privileged to be exempt from it; and he calls that nation unwise, and those laws iniquitous, which tolerate so flagrant an abuse. He would not allow a tradesman, who lives by his reputation for honesty, to be calumniated as dishonest, without the means of vindicating his character unless by an oppressive and dilatory procedure, while a peer, who perhaps may live by dishonesty, as some are reported to have done in former reigns, recurs to an immediate and uncostly remedy against a similar accusation. He would not see Mother Church lie with a lawyer on the woolsack, nor the ministry of the apostles devolve on the Crown, sacred and uncontaminated as we see it is.

Parker. No scoffs at the Crown, I do beseech you, Mr Marvel! whatever enmity you and Mr Milton may bear against the peers. He would have none of them, it seems.

Marvel. He would have as many as can prove, by any precedent or argument, that virtue and abilities are hereditary; and I believe he would stint them exactly to that number. In regard to their services, he made these observations a few days ago: "Why, in God's name, friend Andrew, do we imagine that a thing can be made stable by pulling at it perpetually in different directions? Where there are contrary and conflicting interests, one will predominate at one time, another at another. Now, what interest at any time ought to predominate against the public? We hear, indeed, that when the royal power is oppressive to them, the peers push their horns against the leopards; but did they so in the time of James or his son? And are not the people strong enough to help and right themselves, if they were but wise enough? And if they were wise enough, would they whistle for the wolves to act in concert with the shepherd-dogs? Our consciences tell us," added he, "that we should have done some good, had our intentions been well seconded and supported. Collegians and barristers and courtiers may despise the poverty of our intellects, throw a few of their old scraps into our satchels, and send the beadle to show us the road we ought to take: nevertheless, we are wilful, and refuse to surrender our old customary parochial footpath.

Parker. And could not he let alone the poor innocent collegians?

Marvel. Nobody ever thought them more innocent than he, unless when their square caps were fanning the flames round heretics; and every man is liable to be a heretic in his turn. Collegians have always been foremost in the cure of the *lues* of heresy by sweating and caustic.

Parker. Sir! they have always been foremost in maintaining the unity of the faith.

Marvel. So zealously, that whatever was the king's faith was theirs. And thus it will always be, until their privileges and immunities are in jeopardy; then shall you see them the most desperate incendiaries.

Parker. After so many species of religion, generated in the

sty of old corruptions, we return to what experience teaches us is best. If the Independents, or any other sect, had reason on their side and truly evangelical doctrine, they would not die away and come to nothing as they have done.

Marvel. Men do not stick very passionately and tenaciously to a pure religion: there must be honey on the outside of it, and warmth within, and latitude around, or they make little bellow and bustle about it. That Milton has been latterly no frequenter of public worship may be lamented, but is not unaccountable. He has lived long enough to perceive that all sects are animated by a spirit of hostility and exclusion,—a spirit the very opposite to the gospel. There is so much malignity, hot-blooded and cold-blooded, in zealots, that I do not wonder at seeing the honest man, who is tired of dissension and controversy, wrap himself up in his own quiet conscience, and indulge in a tranquillity somewhat like sleep apart. Nearly all are of opinion that devotion is purer and more ardent in solitude, but declare to you that they believe it to be their duty to set an example by going to church. Is not this pride and vanity? What must they conceive of their own value and importance, to imagine that others will necessarily look up to them as guides and models! A hint of such an infirmity arouses all their choler; and from that moment we are unworthy of being saved by them. But if they abandon us to what must appear to them so hopeless a condition, can we doubt whether they would not abandon a babe floating like Moses in a basket on a wide and rapid river? I have always found these people, whatever may be the sect, self-sufficient, hard-hearted, intolerant, and unjust,—in short, the opposite of Milton. What wonder, then, if he abstains from their society; particularly in places of worship, where it must affect a rational and religious man the most painfully? He thinks that churches, as now constituted, are to religion what pest-houses are to health,—that they often infect those who ailed nothing, and withhold them from freedom and exercise. Austerity hath oftener been objected to him than indifference. That neither of the objections is well-founded, I think I can demonstrate by an anecdote. Visiting him last month, I found him hearing read by his daughter the treatise of Varro *On Agriculture;* and I said, laughingly, "We will walk over your farm together." He smiled, although he

could not see that I did; and he answered, "I never wish to possess a farm, because I can enjoy the smell of the hay and of the hawthorn in a walk to Hampstead, and can drink fresh milk there." After a pause, he added, "I cannot tell (for nobody is more ignorant in these matters) in what our agriculture differs from the ancient; but I am delighted to be reminded of a custom which my girl has been recalling to my memory,—the custom of crowning with a garland of sweet herbs, once a year, the brink of wells. Andrew! the old moss-grown stones were not neglected, from under which the father and son, the wife and daughter, drew the same pure element with the same thankfulness as their hale progenitors." His piety is infused into all the moods of his mind: here it was calm and gentle, at other times it was ardent and enthusiastic. The right application of homely qualities is of daily and general use. We all want glass for the window: few want it for the telescope.

Parker. It is very amiable to undertake the defence of a person who, whatever may be his other talents, certainly has possessed but in a moderate degree the talent of making or of retaining friends.

Marvel. He, by the constitution of the human mind, or rather by its configuration under those spiritual guides who claim the tutelage of it, must necessarily have more enemies than even another of the same principles. The great abhor the greater, who can humble but cannot raise them. The king's servants hate God's as much (one would fancy) as if he fed them better, dressed them finelier, and gave them more plumy titles. Poor Milton has all these against him: what is wanting in weight is made up by multitude and multiformity. Judges and privy counsellors throw axes and halters in his path; divines grow hard and earthy about him; slim, straddling, blotchy writers, those of quality in particular, feel themselves cramped and stunted under him; and people of small worth in every way detract from his, stamping on it as if they were going to spring over it. Whatever they pick up against him, they take pains to circulate; and are sorrier at last that the defamation is untrue than that they helped to propagate it. I wish truth were as prolific as falsehood, and as many were ready to educate her offspring. But although we see the progeny of falsehood shoot up into amazing

stature, and grow day by day more florid, yet they soon have reached their maturity,—soon lose both teeth and tresses. As the glory of England is in part identified with Milton's, his enemies are little less than parricides. If they had any sight beyond to-day, what would they give, how would they implore and supplicate, to be forgotten!

Parker. Very conscientious men may surely have reprehended him, according to the lights that God has lent them.

Marvel. They might have burned God's oil in better investigations. Your conscientious men are oftener conscientious in withholding than in bestowing.

Parker. Writers of all ranks and conditions, from the lowest to the highest, have disputed with Mr Milton on all the topics he has undertaken.

Marvel. And I am grieved to think that he has noticed some of them. Salmasius alone was not unworthy *sublimi flagello.* But what would your lordship argue from the imprudence and irreverence of the dwarfs? The most prominent rocks and headlands are most exposed to the violence of the sea; but those which can repel the waves are in little danger from the corrosion of the limpets.

Parker. Mr Milton may reasonably be censured for writing on subjects whereof his knowledge is imperfect or null: on courts, for instance. The greater part of those who allow such a license to their pens, and he among the rest, never were admitted into them. I am sorry to remark that our English are the foremost beagles in this cry.

Marvel. If Milton was never admitted within them, he never was importunate for admittance; and, if none were suffered to enter but such as are better and wiser than he, the gates of Paradise are themselves less glorious, and with less difficulty thrown open. The great, as we usually call the fortunate, are only what Solomon says about them,—"the highest part of the dust of the world;" and this highest part is the lightest. Do you imagine that all the ministers and kings under the canopy of heaven are, in the sight of a pure Intelligence, equivalent to him whom this pure Intelligence hath enabled to penetrate with an unfailing voice the dense array of distant generations? Can princes give more than God can; or

are their gifts better? That they are usually thought so, is no conclusive proof of the fact. On the contrary, with me at least, what is usually thought on any subject of importance, and on many of none, lies under the suspicion of being wrong; for surely the number of those who think correctly is smaller than of those who think incorrectly, even where passions and interests interfere the least. Of those who appear to love God, and who sincerely think they do, the greater part must be conscious that they are not very fond of the men whom he hath shown himself the most indulgent to, and the most enriched with abilities and virtues. Among the plants of the field we look out for the salubrious, and we cultivate and cull them; to the wholesomer of our fellow-creatures we exhibit no such partiality: we think we do enough when we only pass them without treading on them; if we leave them to blossom and run to seed, it is forbearance.

Parker. Mr Milton hath received his reward from his employers.

Marvel. His services are hardly yet begun; and no mortal man, no series of transitory generations, can repay them. God will not delegate this; no, not even to his angels. I venture no longer to stand up for him on English ground; but, since we both are Englishmen by birth, I may stand up for the remainder of our countrymen. Your lordship is pleased to remark that they are the first *beagles* in the cry against courts. Now I speak with all the freedom and all the field-knowledge of a Yorkshireman, when I declare that your lordship is a bad sportsman in giving a *hound's* title to dogs that hunt vermin.

Parker. Mr Marvel! a person of your education should abstain from mentioning thus contemptuously men of the same rank and condition as yourself.

Marvel. All are of the same rank and condition with me who have climbed as high, who have stood as firmly, and who have never yet descended. Neglect of time, subserviency to fortune, compliance with power and passions, would thrust men far below me, although they had been exalted higher, to the uncalculating eye, than mortal ever was exalted. Sardanapalus had more subjects and more admirers than Cromwell; whom,

nevertheless, I venture to denominate the most sagacious and prudent, the most tolerant and humane, the most firm and effective, prince in the annals of our country.

Parker. Usurpers should not be thus commended.

Marvel. Usurpers are the natural and imprescriptible successors of imbecile, unprincipled, and lawless kings. In general, they too are little better furnished with virtues, and even their wisdom seems to wear out under the ermine. Ambition makes them hazardous and rash: these qualities raise the acclamations of the vulgar, to whom meteors are always greater than stars, and the same qualities which raised them precipitate them into perdition. Sometimes obstreperous mirth, sometimes gipsy-like mysteriousness, sometimes the austerity of old republicanism, and sometimes the stilts of modern monarchy, come into play, until the crowd hisses the actor off the stage, pelted, broken-headed, and stumbling over his sword. Cromwell used none of these grimaces. He wore a mask while it suited him; but its features were grave, and he threw it off in the heat of action.

Parker. On the whole, you speak more favorably of a man who was only your equal than of those whom legitimate power has raised above you.

Marvel. Never can I do so much good as he did. He was hypocritical, and, in countermining perfidy, he was perfidious; but his wisdom, his valor, and his vigilance saved the nation at Worcester and Dunbar. He took unlawful and violent possession of supreme authority; but he exercised it with moderation and discretion. Even fanaticism had with him an English cast of countenance. He never indulged her appetite in blood, nor carried her to hear the music of tortures reverberated by the arch of a dungeon. He supplied her with no optical glass at the spectacle of mutilations; he never thought, as Archbishop Laud did, he could improve God's image by amputating ears and slitting noses; he never drove men into holy madness with incessant howlings, like the lycanthropic saints of the North.

Having, then, before me not only his arduous achievements, but likewise his abstinence from those evil practices in which all our sovereigns, his predecessors, had indulged, I should be the most insolent and the most absurd of mortals if I supposed that the Protector of England was only my equal. But I am

not obliged by the force of truth and duty to admit even to this position those whom court servility may proclaim to the populace as my superiors. A gardener may write *sweet lupin* on the cover of rape seed; but the cover will never turn rape-seed into sweet lupin. Something more than a couple of beasts, couchant or rampant, blue or blazing, or than a brace of birds with a claw on a red curtain, is requisite to raise an earl or a marquis up to me, although lion-king-at-arms and garter-kings-at-arms equip them with all their harness, and beget them a grandfather each. I flap down with the border of my glove, and brush away and blow off these gossamer pretensions; and I take for my motto, what the king bears for his, I hope as a model for all his subjects,—"Dieu et mon droit."

Parker. Mr Marvel! Mr Marvel! I did not think you so proud a man.

Marvel. No, my lord?—not when you know that Milton is my friend? If you wish to reduce me and others to our level, pronounce that name, and we find it. The French motto, merely from its being French, recalls my attention to what I was about to notice when your lordship so obligingly led me to cover. I will now undertake to prove that the English beagles are neither the first nor the best in scenting what lieth about courts. A French writer, an ecclesiastic, a dignitary, a bishop, wrote lately,—

"Courts are full of ill offices: it is there that all the passions are in an uproar;* it is there that hatred and friendship change incessantly for interest, and nothing is constant but the desire of injuring. Friend, as Jeremiah says, is fraudulent to friend, brother to brother. The art of ensnaring has nothing dishonorable in it excepting ill success. In short, virtue herself, often false, becomes more to be dreaded than vice."

Now, if there were any like place upon earth, would not even the worst prince, the worst people, insist on its destruction? What brothel, what gaming-house, what den of thieves, what wreck, what conflagration, ought to be surrounded so strictly by the protectors of property, the guardians of morals, and the ministers of justice? Should any such conspirator, any aider or

* The original is defective in logic. "C'est là que toutes les passions se réunissent pour s'entre-chocquer et *se détruire*." So much the better, were it true.

abettor, any familiar or confidant, of such conspiracy be suffered to live at large? Milton, in the mildness of his humanity, would at once let loose the delinquents, and would only nail up for ever the foul receptacle.

Parker. The description is exaggerated.

Marvel. It is not a schoolboy's theme, beginning with, "Nothing is more sure," or, "Nothing is more deplorable;" it is not an undergraduate's exercise, drawn from pure fresh thoughts, where there are only glimpses through the wood before him, or taken up in reliance on higher men to whom past ages have bowed in veneration: no, the view is taken on the spot by one experienced and scientific in it,—by the dispassionate, the disinterested, the clear-sighted, and clear-souled Massillon.

Parker. To show his eloquence, no doubt.

Marvel. No eloquence is perfect, none worth showing, none becoming a Christian teacher, but that in which the postulates are just, and the deductions not carried beyond nor cast beside them, nor strained hard, nor snatched hastily. I quote not from stern republicans; I quote not from loose lay people: but from the interior of the court, from the closet of the palace, from under the canopy and cope of Episcopacy herself. In the same spirit, the amiable and modest Fénélon speaks thus: "Alas! to what calamities are kings exposed! The wisest of them are often taken by surprise; men of artifice, swayed by self-interest, surround them; the good retire from them, because they are neither supplicants nor flatterers, and because they wait to be inquired for, and princes know not where they are to be found. Oh how unhappy is a king, to be exposed to the designs of the wicked!"

It is impossible to draw any other deduction from this hypothesis than the necessity of abolishing the kingly office, not only for the good of the people, but likewise of the functionaries. Why should the wisest and the best among them be subject to so heavy a calamity,—a calamity so easily avoided? Why should there be tolerated a focus and point of attraction for wicked men? Why should we permit the good to be excluded, whether by force or shame, from any place which ought to be a post of honor? Why do we suffer a block to stand in their way, which by its nature hath neither eyes to discern them, nor those about it who would permit the use of the discovery if it had?

Parker. Horrible questions! leading God knows whither!

Marvel. The questions are originally not mine. No person who reasons on what he reads can ever have read the works of Fénélon, and not have asked them. If what he says is true, they follow necessarily; and the answer is ready for every one of them. That they are true we may well surmise; for surely nobody was less likely to express his sentiments with prejudice or precipitancy or passion. He and Massillon are such witnesses against courts and royalty as cannot be rejected. They bring forward their weighty and conclusive evidence, not only without heat, but without intention, and disclose what they overheard as they communed with their conscience. There may be malice in the thoughts, and acrimony in the expressions, of those learned men who, as you remark, were never admitted into courts; although malice and acrimony are quite as little to be expected in them as in the spectators at a grand amphitheatre, because they could only be retired and look on, and were precluded from the arena in the combat of man and beast.

Parker. There may be malice where there is no acrimony: there may be here.

Marvel. The existence of either is impossible in well-regulated minds.

Parker. I beg your pardon, Mr Marvel.

Marvel. What, my lord! do you admit that even in well-regulated minds the worst passions may be excited by royalty? It must, then, be bad indeed; worse than Milton, worse than Massillon, worse than Fénélon, represents it. The frugal republican may detest it for its vicious luxury and inordinate expenditure; the strict religionist, as one of the worst curses an offended God inflicted on a disobedient and rebellious people; the man of calmer and more indulgent piety may grieve at seeing it, with all its devils, possess the swine, pitying the poor creatures into which it is permitted to enter, not through their fault, but their infirmity, —not by their will, but their position.

Parker. And do you imagine it is by their will that what is inrooted is taken away from them?

Marvel. Certainly not. Another proof of their infirmity. Did you ever lose a rotten tooth, my lord, without holding up your hand against it? Or was there ever one drawn at which

you did not rejoice when it was done? All the authorities we have brought forward may teach us, that the wearer of a crown is usually the worse for it; that it collects the most vicious of every kind about it, as a nocturnal blaze in uncultivated lands collects poisonous reptiles; and that it renders bad those who, without it, might never have become so. But no authority, before your lordship, ever went so far as to throw within its noxious agency the little that remained uncorrupted: none ever told us, for our caution, that it can do what nothing else can; namely, that it can excite the worst passions in well-regulated minds.

O Royalty! if this be true, I, with my lord bishop, will detest and abhor thee as the most sweeping leveller! Go, go, thou indivisible in the infernal triad with Sin and Death!

Parker. I must not hear this.

Marvel. I spoke hypothetically, and stood within your own premises, referring to no actual state of things, and least of all inclined to touch upon the very glorious one in which we live. Royalty is in her place, and sits gracefully by the side of our second Charles.

Parker. Here, Mr Marvel, we have no divergence of opinion.

Marvel. Enjoying this advantage, I am the more anxious that my friend should partake in it, whose last political conversation with me was greatly more moderate than the language of the eloquent French bishop. "We ought," said he, "to remove any thing by which a single fellow-creature may be deteriorated: how much rather, then, that which deteriorates many millions, and brands with the stamp of servitude the brow of the human race!"

Parker. Do you call this more moderate?

Marvel. I call it so, because it is more argumentative. It is in the temper and style of Milton to avoid the complaining tone of the one prelate, and the declamatory of the other. His hand falls on his subject without the softener of cuff or ruffle.

Parker. So much the worse. But better as it is than with an axe in it; for God knows where it might fall.

Marvel. He went on saying that the most clear-sighted kings can see but a little way before them and around them, there being so many mediums; and that delegated authority is liable to gross abuses.

Parker. Republics, too, must delegate a portion of their authority to agents at a distance.

Marvel. Every agent in a well-regulated republic is a portion of itself. Citizen must resemble citizen in all political essentials; but what is privileged bears little resemblance to what is unprivileged. In fact, the words *privilege* and *prerogative* are *manifestoes* of injustice, without one word added.

Parker. Yet the people would not have your republic when they had tried it.

Marvel. Nor would the people have God when they had tried him. But is this an argument why we should not obey his ordinances, and serve him with all our strength?

Parker. Oh, strange comparison! I am quite shocked, Mr Marvel!

Marvel. What! at seeing any work of the Deity at all resemble the Maker, at all remind us of him? May I be often so shocked, that light thoughts and troublesome wishes and unworthy resentments may be shaken off me; and that the Giver of all good may appear to me and converse with me in the garden he has planted!

Parker. Then walk humbly with him, Mr Marvel.

Marvel. Every day I bend nearer to the dust that is to receive me; and, if this were not sufficient to warn me, the sight of my old friend would. I repress my own aspirations that I may continue to repeat his words, tending to prove the vast difference between the administration of a kingly government and a commonwealth, where all offices in contact with the people are municipal, where the officers are chosen on the spot by such as know them personally, and by such as have an immediate and paramount interest in giving them the preference. This, he insisted, is the greatest of all advantages; and this alone (but truly it is *not* alone) would give the republican an incontestable superiority over every other system.

Parker. Supposing it in theory to have its merits, the laws no longer permit us to recommend it in practice.

Marvel. I am not attempting to make or to reclaim a convert. The foot that has slipped back is less ready for progress than the foot that never had advanced.

Parker. Sir! I know my duty to God and my king.

Marvel. I also have attempted to learn mine, however unsuccessfully.

Parker. There is danger, sir, in holding such discourses. The cause is no longer to be defended without a violation of the statutes.

Marvel. I am a republican, and will die one; but rather, if the choice is left me, in my own bed; yet on turf or over the ladder unreluctantly, if God draws thitherward the cause and conscience, and strikes upon my heart to waken me. I have been, I will not say tolerant and indulgent (words applicable to children only), but friendly and cordial toward many good men whose reason stood in opposition and almost (if reason can be hostile) in hostility to mine. When we desire to regulate our watches, we keep them attentively before us, and touch them carefully, gently, delicately, with the finest and best-tempered instrument, day after day. When we would manage the minds of men, finding them at all different from our own, we thrust them away from us with blind impetuosity, and throw them down in the dirt to make them follow us the quicklier. In the turbulence of attack from all directions, our cause hath been decried by some, not for being bad in itself, but for being supported by bad men. What! are there no pretenders to charity, to friendship, to devotion? Should we sit uneasy and shuffling under it, and push our shoulders against every post to rub it off, merely for the Scotch having worn it in common with us, and for their having shortened, unstitched, and sold it?

Parker. Their history is overrun more rankly than any other, excepting the French, with blood and treachery.*

Marvel. Half of them are Menteiths.† Even their quietest and most philosophical spirits are alert and clamorous in defence of any villany committed by power or compensated by wealth. In the degeneracy of Greece, in her utter subjugation, was there one historian or one poet vile enough to represent as

* Undoubtedly such were the sentiments of Milton and Marvel; and they were just. But Scotland in our days has produced not only the calmest and most profound reasoners, she has also given birth to the most enlightened and energetic patriots.

† Menteith was the betrayer of Wallace, the bravest hero, the hero in most points, our island has gloried in since Alfred.

blameless the conduct of Clytemnestra? Yet what labors of the press are bestowed on a Queen of Scotland, who committed the same crime without the same instigation, who had been educated in the principles of Christianity, who had conversed from her girlhood with the polite and learned, and who had spent only a very few years among the barbarians of the North!

Parker. Her subjects were angry, not that she was punished, but that she was unpaid for. They would have sold her cheaper than they sold her grandson; and, being so reasonable, they were outrageous that there were no bidders. Mr Marvel! the Scotch have always been cringing when hungry, always cruel when full: their avarice is without satiety, their corruption is without shame, and their ferocity is without remorse.

Marvel. Among such men there may be demagogues, there cannot be republicans; there may be lovers of free quarters, there cannot be of freedom. Reverencing the bold and the sincere, and in them the character of our country, we Englishmen did not punish those ministers who came forth uncited, and who avowed in the House of Commons that they had been the advisers of the Crown in all the misdemeanors against which we brought the heaviest charges. We bethought us of the ingratitude, of the injuries, of the indignities, we had sustained; we bethought us of our wealth transferred from the nation to raise up enemies against it; we bethought us of patient piety and of tranquil courage in chains, in dungeons, tortured, maimed, mangled, for the assertion of truth and of freedom, of religion and of law.

Parker. Our most gracious king is disposed to allow a considerable latitude, repressing at the same time that obstinate spirit which prevails across the border. Much of the Scottish character may be attributed to the national religion, in which the damnatory has the upper hand of the absolving.

Marvel. Our judges are merciful to those who profess the king's reputed and the duke's acknowledged tenets; but let a man stand up for the Independents, and out pops Mr Attorney-General, throws him on his back, claps a tongue-scraper into his mouth, and exercises it resolutely and unsparingly.

Parker. I know nothing of your new-fangled sects; but

the doctrines of the Anglican and the Romish church approximate.

Marvel. The shepherd of the seven hills teaches his sheep in what tone to bleat before him, just as the Tyrolean teaches his bullfinch, — first by depriving him of sight, and then by making him repeat a certain series of notes at stated intervals. Prudent and quiet people will choose their churches as they choose their ale-houses,—partly for the wholesomeness of the draught, and partly for the moderation of the charges; but the host in both places must be civil, and must not damn you, body and soul, by way of invitation. The wheat-sheaf is a very good sign for the one, and a very bad one for the other. Tithes are more ticklish things than tenets, when men's brains are sound; and there are more and worse stumbling-blocks at the barn-door than at the church-porch. I never saw a priest, Romanist or Anglican, who would tuck up his surplice to remove them. Whichever does it first will have the most voices for him: but he must be an Englishman, and serve only Englishmen; he must resign the cook's perquisites to the Spaniard; he must give up not only the fat, but the blood; and he must keep fewer fagots in the kitchen. Since whatever the country, whatever the state of civilization, the Church of Rome remains the same; since under her influence the polite Louis at the present day commits as much bloodshed and perfidy, and commands as many conflagrations and rapes to her honor and advancement as the most barbarous kings and prelates in times past,—I do hope that no insolence, no rapacity, no profligacy, no infidelity, in our own lord spiritual will render us either the passive captives of her insinuating encroachments, or the indifferent spectators of her triumphal entrance. We shall be told it was the religion of Alfred, the religion of the Plantagenets. There may be victory, there may be glory, there may be good men, under all forms and fabrics of belief. Titus, Trajan, the two Antonines, the two Gordians, Probus, Tacitus, rendered their countrymen much happier than the Plantagenets, or the greater and better Alfred, could do. Let us receive as brethren our countrymen of every creed, and reject as Christians those only who refuse to receive them.

Parker. Most willingly, if such is the pleasure of the King and Privy Council. And I am delighted to find you, who are so steadfast a republican, extolling the emperors.

Marvel. Your idea of *emperor* is incorrect or inadequate. Cincinnatus and Cato were emperors in the Roman sense of the word. The Germans and Turks and Marocchines cut out theirs upon another model. These Romans, and many more in the same station, did nothing without the consent, the approbation, the *command* (for such was the expression), of the senate and the people. They lived among the wiser and better citizens, with whom they conversed as equals, and, where it was proper (for instance, on subjects of literature), as inferiors. From these they took their wives, and with the sons and daughters of these they educated their children. In the decline of the Commonwealth, kings themselves, on the boundaries of the empire, were daily and hourly conversant with honest and learned men. All princes in our days are so educated as to detest the unmalleable and unmelting honesty which will receive no impression from them; nor do they even let you work for them unless they can bend you double. We must strip off our own clothes, or they never will let us be measured for their livery, which has now become our only protection.

Parker. It behooves us to obey; otherwise we can expect no forbearance and no tranquillity.

Marvel. I wish the tranquillity of our country may last beyond our time, although we should live (which we cannot expect to do) twenty years.

Parker. God grant we may!

Marvel. Life clings with the pertinacity of an impassioned mistress to many a man who is willing to abandon it, while he who too much loves it loses it.

Parker. Twenty years!

Marvel. I have enjoyed but little of it at a time when it becomes a necessary of life, and I fear I shall leave as little for a heritage.

Parker. But in regard to living,—we are both of us hale men; we may hope for many days yet; we may yet see many changes.

Marvel. I have lived to see one too many.

Parker. Whoever goes into political life must be contented with the same fare as others of the same rank who embark in the same expedition.

Marvel. Before his cruise is over, he learns to be satisfied with a very small quantity of fresh provisions. His nutriment is from what is stale, and his courage from what is heady; he looks burly and bold, but a fatal disease is lying at the bottom of an excited and inflated heart. We think to thrive by surrendering our capacities; but we can no more live, my lord bishop, with breathing the breath of other men, than we can by not breathing our own. Compliancy will serve us poorly and ineffectually. Men, like columns, are only strong while they are upright.

Parker. You were speaking of other times; and you always speak best among the Greeks and Romans. Continue, pray!

Marvel. Sovereignty, in the heathen world, had sympathies with humanity; and power never thought herself contaminated by touching the hand of wisdom. It was before Andromache came on the stage, painted and patched and powdered, with a hogshead-hoop about her haunches and a pack-saddle on her pole, surmounted with upright hair larded and dredged; it was before Orestes was created monseigneur; it was before there strutted under a triumphal arch of curls, and through a Via Sacra of plumery, Louis the Fourteenth.

Parker. The ally of His Majesty—

Marvel. And something more. A gilded organ-pipe, puffed from below for those above to play.

Parker. Respect the cousin—

Marvel. I know not whose cousin; but the acknowledged brat of milliner and furrier, with *perruquier* for godfather. And such, forsooth, are the *make-believes* we must respect! A nucleus of powder! an efflorescence of frill!

Parker. Subject and prince stand now upon another footing than formerly.

Marvel. Indeed they do. How dignified is the address of Plutarch to Trajan! how familiar is Pliny's to Vespasian! how tender, how paternal, is Fronto's to Antoninus! how totally free from adulation and servility is Julius Pollux to the ungentle Commodus! Letters were not trampled down dis-

dainfully either in the groves of Antioch or under the colonnades of Palmyra. Not pleasure, the gentle enfeebler of the human intellect; not tyranny and bigotry, its violent assailants,—crossed the walk of the philosopher, to stand between him and his speculations. What is more: two ancient religions, the Grecian and Egyptian, met in perfectly good temper at Alexandria, lived and flourished there together for many centuries, united in honoring whatever was worthy of honor in each communion, and never heard of persecution for matters of opinion until Christianity came and taught it. Thenceforward, for fifteen hundred years, blood has been perpetually spouting from underneath her footsteps; and the wretch, clinging exhausted to the cross, is left naked by the impostor, who pretends to have stripped him only to heal his wounds.

Parker. Presbyterians, and other sectaries, were lately as cruel and hypocritical as any in former times.

Marvel. They were certainly not less cruel, and perhaps even more hypocritical. English hearts were contracted and hardened by an open exposure to the North: they now are collapsing into the putridity of the South. We were ashamed of a beggarly distemper, but parasitical and skin-deep; we are now ostentatious of a gentlemanly one, eating into the very bones.

Parker. Our children may expect from Lord Clarendon a fair account of the prime movers in the late disturbances.

Marvel. He knew but one party, and saw it only in its gala suit. He despises those whom he left on the old litter; and he fancies that all who have not risen want the ability to rise. No doubt, he will speak unfavorably of those whom I most esteem: be it so; if their lives and writings do not controvert him, they are unworthy of my defence. Were I upon terms of intimacy with him, I would render him a service by sending him the best translations, from Greek and Latin authors, of maxims left us by the wisest men,—maxims which my friends held longer than their fortunes, and dearer than their lives. And are the vapors of such quagmires as Clarendon to overcast the luminaries of mankind? Should a Hyde lift up,—I will not say his hand, I will not say his voice,—should he lift up his eyes against a Milton?

Parker. Mr Milton would have benefited the world much more by coming into its little humors, and by complying with it cheerfully.

Marvel. As the needle turns away from the rising sun, from the meridian, from the Occident, from regions of fragrancy and gold and gems, and moves with unerring impulse to the frosts and deserts of the North, so Milton and some few others, in politics, philosophy, and religion, walk through the busy multitude, wave aside the importunate trader, and, after a momentary oscillation from external agency, are found in the twilight and in the storm pointing with certain index to the pole-star of immutable truth.

Parker. The nation in general thanks him little for what he has been doing.

Marvel. Men who have been unsparing of their wisdom, like ladies who have been unfrugal of their favors, are abandoned by those who owe most to them, and hated or slighted by the rest. I wish beauty in her lost estate had consolations like genius.

Parker. Fie, fie! Mr Marvel! Consolations for frailty!

Marvel. What wants them more? The reed is cut down, and seldom does the sickle wound the hand that cuts it. There it lies; trampled on, withered, and soon to be blown away.

Parker. We should be careful and circumspect in our pity, and see that it falls on clean ground. Such a laxity of morals can be taught only in Mr Milton's school. He composed, I remember, a *Treatise on Divorce*, and would have given it great facilities.

Marvel. He proved by many arguments what requires but few,—that happiness is better than unhappiness; that, when two persons cannot agree, it is wiser and more Christianlike that they should not disagree; that, when they cease to love each other, it is something if they be hindered by the gentlest of checks from running to the extremity of hatred; and, lastly, how it conduces to circumspection and forbearance to be aware that the bond of matrimony is not indissoluble, and that the bleeding heart may be saved from bursting.

Parker. Monstrous sophistry! abominable doctrines! What more, sir! what more?

Marvel. He proceeds to demonstrate that boisterous manners, captious contradictions, jars, jealousies, suspicions, dissensions, are juster causes of separation than the only one leading to it through the laws;—which fault, grievous as it is to morality and religion, may have occurred but once, and may have been followed by

immediate and most sorrowful repentance, and by a greater anxiety to be clear of future offence than before it was committed; in itself, it is not so irreconcilable and inconsistent with gentleness, good-humor, generosity, and even conjugal affection.

Parker. Palpable perversion!

Marvel. I suppose it to have been committed but once; and then there is the fairest inference, the most reasonable as well as the most charitable supposition,—nay, almost the plainest proof,—of the more legitimate attachment.

Parker. Fear, apprehension of exposure, of shame, of abandonment, may force the vagrant to retrace her steps.

Marvel. God grant, then, the marks of them never may be discovered!

Parker. Let the laws have their satisfaction.

Marvel. Had ever the Harpies theirs, or the Devil his? And yet when were they stinted? Are the laws or are we the better or the milder for this satisfaction?—or is keenness of appetite a sign of it?

Parker. Reverence the laws of God, Mr Marvel, if you contemn those of your country. Even the Parliament, which you and Mr Milton must respect, since no King was coexistent with it, discountenanced and chastised such laxity.

Marvel. I dare not look back upon a Parliament which was without the benefit of a King, and had also lost its spiritual guides,—the barons of your bench; but well do I remember that our blessed Lord and Saviour was gentler in his rebuke to the woman who had offended, than he was to Scribes and Pharisees.

Parker. There is no argument of any hold on men of slippery morals.

Marvel. My morals have indeed been so slippery that they have let me down on the ground and left me there. Every year I have grown poorer; yet never was I conscious of having spent my money among the unworthy, until the time came for them to show it by their ingratitude. My morals have not made me slip into an Episcopal throne—

Parker. Neither have mine me, sir! and I would have you to know it, Mr Marvel!

Marvel. Your lordship has already that satisfaction.

Parker. Pardon my interruption, my dear sir! and the appearance of warmth, such as truth and sincerity at times put on.

Marvel. It belongs to your lordship to grant pardon; it is ours, who have offended, to receive it.

Parker. Mr Marvel, I have always admired your fine gentlemanly manners, and regretted that you never have turned your wit to good account, in an age when hardly any thing else is held of value. Sound learning rises indeed, but rises slowly; piety, although in estimation with the King, is less prized by certain persons who have access to his presence; wit, Mr Marvel, when properly directed,—not too high nor too low,—will sooner or later find a patron. It is well at all times to avoid asperity and acrimony, and to submit with a willing mind to God's dispensations, be what they may. Probably a great part of your friend's misfortunes may be attributed to the intemperance of his rebukes.

Marvel. Then what you call immoral and impious did him less harm?

Parker. I would not say *that* altogether. To me, indeed, his treatise on *Divorce* is most offensive: the treatise on *Prelaty* is contemptible.

Marvel. Nevertheless, in the narrow view of my humble understanding, there is no human eloquence at all comparable to certain parts of it. And permit me to remind your lordship, that you continued on the most friendly terms with him long after its publication.

Parker. I do not give up a friend for a trifle.

Marvel. Your lordship, it appears, must have more than a trifle for the surrender. I have usually found that those who make faults of foibles, and crimes of faults, have within themselves an impulse toward worse, and give ready way to such impulse whenever they can secretly or safely. There is a gravity which is not austere nor captious, which belongs not to melancholy, nor dwells in contraction of heart, but arises from tenderness and hangs upon reflection.

Parker. Whatsoever may be the gravity of Mr Milton, I have heard indistinctly that he has not always been the

kindest of husbands. Being a sagacious and a prudent man, he ought never to have taken a wife until he had ascertained her character.

Marvel. Pray inform me whether the wisest men have been the most fortunate, or, if you prefer the expression, the most provident, in their choice? Of Solomon's wives (several hundreds) is it recorded that a single one sympathized with him, loved him, respected him, or esteemed him? His wisdom and his poetry flowed alike on barren sand; his cedar frowned on him; his lily drooped and withered before he had raised up his head from its hard, cold glossiness, or had inhaled its fragrance with a second sigh. Disappointments sour most the less experienced. Young ladies are ready in imagining that marriage is all cake and kisses; but very few of them are housewives long, before they discover that the vinous fermentation may be followed too soon by the acetous. Rarely do they discover, and more rarely do they admit, that such is the result of their own mismanagement. What woman can declare with sincerity that she never in the calmer days of life has felt surprise—and shame also, if she is virtuous and sensible—at recollecting how nearly the same interest was excited in her by the most frivolous and least frivolous of her admirers. The downy thistle-seed, hard to be uprooted, is carried by the lightest breath of air, and takes an imperceptible hold on what it catches: it falls the more readily into the more open breast; but sometimes the less open is vainly buttoned up against it.

Milton has, I am afraid, imitated too closely the authoritative voice of the patriarchs, and been somewhat too Oriental (I forbear to say Scriptural) in his relations as a husband. But who, whether among the graver or less grave, is just to woman? There may be moments when the beloved tells us, and tells us truly, that we are dearer to her than life. Is not this enough? Is it not above all merit? Yet, if ever the ardor of her enthusiasm subsides; if her love ever loses, later in the day, the spirit and vivacity of its early dawn; if between the sigh and the blush an interval is perceptible; if the arm mistakes the chair for the shoulder,—what an outcry is there! what a proclamation of her injustice and her inconstancy! what an alternation of shrinking and spurning at the coldness of her heart! Do we ask

within if our own has retained all its ancient loyalty, all its own warmth, and all that was poured into it? Often the true lover has little of true love compared with what he has undeservedly received and unreasonably exacts. But let it also be remembered that marriage is the metempsychosis of women,—that it turns them into different creatures from what they were before. Liveliness in the girl may have been mistaken for good temper; the little pervicacity which at first is attractively provoking, at last provokes without its attractiveness; negligence of order and propriety, of duties and civilities, long endured, often deprecated, ceases to be tolerable, when children grow up and are in danger of following the example. It often happens that, if a man unhappy in the married state were to disclose the manifold causes of his uneasiness, they would be found, by those who were beyond their influence, to be of such a nature as rather to excite derision than sympathy. The waters of bitterness do not fall on his head in a cataract, but through a colander,—one, however, like the vases of the Danaides, perforated only for replenishment. We know scarcely the vestibule of a house of which we fancy we have penetrated into all the corners. We know not how grievously a man may have suffered, long before the calumnies of the world befell him as he reluctantly left his house-door. There are women from whom incessant tears of anger swell forth at imaginary wrongs; but, of contrition for their own delinquencies, not one.

Milton, in writing his treatise, of which probably the first idea was suggested from his own residence, was aware that the laws should provide, not only against our violence and injustice, but against our levity and inconstancy; and that a man's capriciousness or satiety should not burst asunder the ties by which families are united. Do you believe that the crime of adultery has never been committed to the end of obtaining a divorce? Do you believe that murder, that suicide, never has been committed because a divorce was unattainable? Thus the most cruel tortures are terminated by the most frightful crimes. Milton has made his appeal to the authority of religion: we lower our eyes from him, and point to the miseries and guilt on every side before us, caused by the corrosion or the violent disruption of bonds which humanity would have loosened. He

would have tried with a patient ear and with a delicate hand the chord that offended by its harshness; and, when he could not reduce it to the proper tone, he would remove it for another.

Parker. Mr Marvel! Mr Marvel! I cannot follow you among these fiddlesticks. The age is notoriously irreligious.

Marvel. I believe it; I know it; and, without a claim to extraordinary acuteness, I fancy I can discover by what means, and by whose agency, it became so. The preachers who exhibit most vehemence are the very men who support the worst corruptions,—corruptions not a portion of our nature, but sticking thereto by our slovenly supineness. Of what use is it to rail against our infirmities, of what use even to pity and bemoan them, if we help not in removing the evils that rise perpetually out of them? Were every man to sweep the mire from before his house every morning, he would have little cause to complain of dirty streets. Some dust might be carried into them by the wind; the tread of multitudes would make unsound what was solid,—yet, nothing being accumulated, the labor of removing the obstructions would be light. Another thing has increased the irreligion and immorality of the people, beside examples in elevated stations. Whatever is over-constrained will relax or crack. The age of Milton (for that was his age in which he was heard and honored) was too religious, if any thing can be called so. Prelaty now lays a soft and frilled hand upon our childishness. Forty years ago she stripped up her sleeve, scourged us heartily, and spat upon us,—to remove the smart, no doubt! This treatment made people run in all directions from her; not unlike the primeval man described by Lucretius, fleeing before the fiercer and stronger animals:

> Viva videns vivo sepeliri viscera busto,
> At quos ecfugium servarat, corpore adeso
> Posterius, tremulas super ulcera tetra tenentes
> Palmas, horrificis adcibant vocibus orcum.

Parker. Dear me! what a memory you possess, good Mr Marvel! You pronounce Latin verses charmingly. I wish you would go on to the end of the book.

Marvel. Permit me to go on a shorter distance,—to the conclusion of my remarks. As popery caused the violence

of the Reformers, so did prelaty (the same thing under another name) the violence of the Presbyterians and Anabaptists. She treated them inhumanly: she reduced to poverty, she exiled, she maimed, she mutilated, she stabbed, she shot, she hanged, those who followed Christ in the narrow and quiet lane, rather than along the dust of the market-road, and who conversed with him rather in the cottage than the tollbooth. She would have nothing pass unless through her hands; and she imposed a heavy and intolerable tax on the necessaries both of physical and of spiritual life. This baronial privilege our Parliament would have suppressed: the King rose against the suppression, and broke his knuckles in the cogs of the mill.

Parker. Sad times, Mr Marvel, sad times! It fills me with heaviness to hear of them.

Marvel. Low places are foggy first; days of sadness wet the people to the skin; they hang loosely for some time upon the ermine, but at last they penetrate it, and cause it to be thrown off. I do not like to hear a man cry out with pain; but I would rather hear one than twenty. Sorrow is the growth of all seasons: we had much, however, to relieve it. Never did our England, since she first emerged from the ocean, rise so high above surrounding nations. The rivalry of Holland, the pride of Spain, the insolence of France, were thrust back by one finger each; yet those countries were then more powerful than they had ever been. The sword of Cromwell was preceded by the mace of Milton; by that mace which, when Oliver had rendered his account, opened to our contemplation the garden-gate of Paradise. And there were some around not unworthy to enter with him. In the compass of sixteen centuries, you will not number on the whole earth so many wise and admirable men as you could have found united in that single day, when England showed her true magnitude and solved the question, *Which is most, one or a million?* There were giants in those days; but giants who feared God, and not who fought against him. Less men, it appears, are braver. They show him a legal writ of ejectment, seize upon his house, and riotously carouse therein. But the morning must come; and heaviness, we know, cometh in the morning.

Parker. Wide is the difference between carousal and austerity.

Your friend miscalculated the steps to fortune, in which as we all are the architects of our own, if we omit the insertion of one or two, the rest are useless in furthering our ascent. He was too passionate, Mr Marvel, he was indeed.

Marvel. Superficial men have no absorbing passion: there are no whirlpools in a shallow. I have often been amused at thinking in what estimation the greatest of mankind were holden by their contemporaries. Not even the most sagacious and prudent one could discover much of them, or could prognosticate their future course in the infinity of space! Men like ourselves are permitted to stand near, and indeed in the very presence of, Milton. What do they see?—dark clothes, gray hair, and sightless eyes! Other men have better things: other men, therefore, are nobler! The stars themselves are only bright by distance; go close, and all is earthy. But vapors illuminate these: from the breath and from the countenance of God comes light on worlds higher than they, —worlds to which he has given the forms and names of Shakspeare and of Milton.

Parker. After all, I doubt whether much of his doctrine is remaining in the public mind.

Marvel. Others are not inclined to remember all that we remember, and will not attend to us if we propose to tell them half. Water will take up but a certain quantity of salt, even of the finest and purest. If the short memories of men are to be quoted against the excellence of instruction, your lordship would never have censured them from the pulpit for forgetting what was delivered by their Saviour. It is much, my lord bishop, that you allow my friend even the pittance of praise you have bestowed; for, if you will permit me to express my sentiments in verse, which I am in the habit of doing, I would say,—

> Men like the ancient kalends, nones, and ides,
> Are reckoned backward, and the first stand last.

I am confident that Milton is heedless of how little weight he is held by those who are of none; and that he never looks toward those somewhat more eminent, between whom and himself there have crept the waters of oblivion. As the pearl ripens in the obscurity of its shell, so ripens in the tomb all the fame that is truly precious. In fame he will be happier than in friendship.

Were it possible that one among the faithful of the angels could have suffered wounds and dissolution in his conflict with the false, I should scarcely feel greater awe at discovering on some bleak mountain the bones of this our mighty defender, once shining in celestial panoply, once glowing at the trumpet-blast of God, but not proof against the desperate and the damned, than I have felt at entering the humble abode of Milton, whose spirit already reaches heaven, yet whose corporeal frame hath no quiet or safe resting-place here below. And shall not I, who loved him early, have the lonely and sad privilege to love him still? Or shall fidelity to power be a virtue, and fidelity to tribulation an offence?

Parker. We may best show our fidelity by our discretion. It becomes my station, and suits my principles, to defend the English Constitution, both in Church and State.

Marvel. You highly praised the *Defence of the English People:* you called it a masterly piece of rhetoric and ratiocination.

Parker. I might have admired the subtilty of it, and have praised the Latinity.

Marvel. Less reasonably. But his godlike mind shines gloriously throughout his work; only perhaps we look the more intently at it for the cloud it penetrates. Those who think we have enough of his poetry still regret that we possess too little of his prose, and wish especially for more of his historical compositions. Davila and Bacon—

Parker. You mean Lord Verulam.

Marvel. That idle title was indeed thrown over his shoulders; but the trapping was unlikely to rest long upon a creature of such proud paces. He and Davila are the only men of high genius among the moderns who have attempted it; and the greater of them has failed. He wanted honesty, he perverted facts, he courted favor: the present in his eyes was larger than the future.

Parker. The Italians, who far excel us in the writing of history, are farther behind the ancients.

Marvel. True enough. From Guicciardini and Machiavelli, the most celebrated of them, we acquire a vast quantity of trivial information. There is about them a sawdust which absorbs much blood and impurity, and of which the level surface is dry; but no

traces by what agency rose such magnificent cities above the hovels of France and Germany,—none

Ut fortis Etruria crevit,

or, on the contrary, how the mistress of the world sank in the ordure of her priesthood.

Scilicet et rerum facta est nequissima Roma.

We are captivated by no charms of description, we are detained by no peculiarities of character: we hear a clamorous scuffle in the street, and we close the door. How different the historians of antiquity! We read Sallust, and always are incited by the desire of reading on, although we are surrounded by conspirators and barbarians; we read Livy, until we imagine we are standing in an august pantheon, covered with altars and standards, over which are the four fatal letters that spellbound all mankind.* We step forth again among the modern Italians: here we find plenty of rogues, plenty of receipts for making more; and little else. In the best passages, we come upon a crowd of dark reflections, which scarcely a glimmer of glory pierces through; and we stare at the tenuity of the spectres, but never at their altitude.

Give me the poetical mind, the mind poetical in all things; give me the poetical heart, the heart of hope and confidence, that beats the more strongly and resolutely under the good thrown down, and raises up fabric after fabric on the same foundation.

Parker. At your time of life, Mr Marvel?

Marvel. At mine, my lord bishop! I have lived with Milton. Such creative and redeeming spirits are like kindly and renovating Nature. Volcano comes after volcano; yet covereth she with herbage and foliage, with vine and olive, and with whatever else refreshes and gladdens her, the Earth that has been gasping under the exhaustion of her throes.

Parker. He has given us such a description of Eve's beauty as appears to me somewhat too pictorial, too luxuriant, too suggestive, too—I know not what.

* S. P. Q. R.

Marvel. The sight of beauty, in her purity and beatitude, turns us from all unrighteousness, and is death to sin.

Parker. Before we part, my good Mr Marvel, let me assure you that we part in amity, and that I bear no resentment in my breast against your friend. I am patient of Mr Milton; I am more than patient,—I am indulgent, seeing that his influence on society is past.

Marvel. Past it is, indeed. What a deplorable thing is it that folly should so constantly have power over wisdom, and wisdom so intermittently over folly! But we live morally, as we used to live politically, under a representative system; and the majority (to employ a phrase of people at elections) carries the day.

Parker. Let us piously hope, Mr Marvel, that God in his good time may turn Mr Milton from the error of his ways, and incline his heart to repentance, and that so he may finally be prepared for death.

Marvel. The wicked can never be prepared for it; the good always are. What is the preparation which so many ruffled wrists point out?—to gabble over prayer and praise and confession and contrition. My lord, heaven is not to be won by short hard work at the last, as some of us take a degree at the university, after much irregularity and negligence. I prefer a steady pace from the outset to the end; coming in cool, and dismounting quietly. Instead of which, I have known many old playfellows of the Devil spring up suddenly from their beds, and strike at him treacherously; while he, without a cuff, laughed and made grimaces in the corner of the room.

XX. STEELE AND ADDISON.[1]

Addison. Dick! I am come to remonstrate with you on those unlucky habits which have been so detrimental to your health and fortune.

[1 Mr Aitken, in his erudite "Life of Steele," says, concerning the subject of this Conversation: "The most trustworthy account is that told by Benjamin Victor to Garrick in a letter written in 1762. He says that

Steele. Many thanks, Mr Addison: but really my fortune is not much improved by your arresting me for the hundred pounds; nor is my health, if spirits are an indication of it, on seeing my furniture sold by auction to raise the money.

Addison. Pooh, pooh, Dick! what furniture had you about the house?

Steele. At least I had the arm-chair, of which you never before had dispossessed me longer than the evening; and happy should I have been to enjoy your company in it again and again, if you had left it me.

Addison. We will contrive to hire another. I do assure you, my dear Dick, I have really felt for you.

Steele. I only wish, my kind friend, you had not put out your feelers quite so far, nor exactly in this direction; and that my poor wife had received an hour's notice: she might have carried a few trinkets to some neighbor. She wanted her salts; and the bailiff thanked her for the bottle that contained them, telling her the gold head of it was worth pretty nearly half-a-guinea.

Addison. Lady Steele then wanted her smelling-bottle? Dear me! the weather, I apprehend, is about to change. Have you any symptoms of your old gout?

Steele. My health has been long on the decline, you know.

Addison. Too well I know it, my dear friend, and I hinted it as delicately as I could. Nothing on earth beside this consideration should have induced me to pursue a measure in appearance so unfriendly. You must grow more temperate,—you really must.

Steele. Mr Addison, you did not speak so gravely and so

he had his relation first from Wilkes, but that afterwards, in 1725, he had a full confirmation of it from Steele's own lips. According to Victor's letter, Steele borrowed £1000 from Addison . . . . on the house at Hampton Wick, giving bond and judgment for the repayment of the money at the end of twelve months. Upon the forfeiture of the bond, Addison's attorney proceeded to execution, the house and furniture being sold, and the surplus sent to Steele with a 'genteel letter' stating the friendly reason for this extraordinary proceeding, viz.: to awaken him, if possible, from a lethargy that must end in his inevitable ruin." . . . . The affair seems to have caused no interruption in the friendship between Steele and Addison. (Ablett's Literary Hours, 1837. Works, ii., 1846. Works, v., 1876.)]

firmly when we used to meet at Will's. You always drank as much as I did, and often invited and pressed me to continue, when I was weary, sleepy, and sick.

Addison. You thought so, because you were drunk. Indeed, at my own house I have sometimes asked you to take another glass, in compliance with the rules of society and hospitality.

Steele. Once, it is true, you did it at your house,—the only time I ever had an invitation to dine in it. The countess was never fond of the wit that smells of wine: her husband could once endure it.

Addison. We could talk more freely, you know, at the tavern. There we have dined together some hundred times.

Steele. Most days, for many years.

Addison. Ah, Dick! since we first met there, several of our friends are gone off the stage.

Steele. And some are still acting.

Addison. Forbear, my dear friend, to joke and smile at infirmities or vices. Many have departed from us in consequence, I apprehend, of indulging in the bottle. When passions are excited, when reason is disturbed, when reputation is sullied, when fortune is squandered, and when health is lost by it, a retreat is sounded in vain. Some cannot hear it; others will not profit by it.

Steele. I must do you the justice to declare, that I never saw any other effect of hard drinking upon you than to make you more circumspect and silent.

Addison. If ever I urged you, in the warmth of my heart, to transgress the bounds of sobriety, I entreat you, as a Christian, to forgive me.

Steele. Most willingly, most cordially.

Addison. I feel confident that you will think of me, speak of me, and write of me, as you have ever done, without a diminution of esteem. We are feeble creatures: we want one another's aid and assistance,—a want ordained by Providence to show us at once our insufficiency and our strength. We must not abandon our friends from slight motives, nor let our passions be our interpreters in their own cause. Consistency is not more requisite to the sound Christian than to the accomplished politician.

Steele. I am inconsistent in my resolutions of improvement, —no man ever was more so; but my attachments have a nerve in them neither to be deadened by ill-treatment nor loosened by indulgence. A man grievously wounded knows by the acuteness of the pain that a spirit of vitality is yet in him: I know that I retain my friendship for you by what you have made me suffer.

Addison. Entirely for your own good, I do protest, if you could see it.

Steele. Alas! all our sufferings are so; the only mischief is, that we have no organs for perceiving it.

Addison. You reason well, my worthy sir; and, relying on your kindness in my favor (for every man has enemies, and those mostly who serve their friends best),—I say, Dick, on these considerations, since you never broke your word with me, and since I am certain you would be sorry it were known that only fourscore pounds' worth could be found in the house, I renounce for the present the twenty yet wanting. Do not beat about for an answer; say not one word; farewell!

Steele. Ah! could not that cold heart,* often and long as I reposed on it, bring me to my senses? I have indeed been drunken; but it is hard to awaken in such heaviness as this of mine is. I shared his poverty with him: I never aimed to share his prosperity. Well, well; I cannot break old habits: I love my glass; I love Addison. Each will partake in killing me. Why cannot I see him again in the arm-chair, his right hand upon his heart under the fawn-colored waistcoat, his brow erect and clear as his conscience; his wig even and composed as his temper, with measurely curls and antithetical top-knots, like his style; the calmest poet, the most quiet patriot: dear Addison! drunk, deliberate, moral, sentimental, foaming over with truth and virtue, with tenderness and friendship, and only the worse in one ruffle for the wine.

* Doubts are now entertained whether the character of Addison is fairly represented by Pope and Johnson. It is better to make this statement than to omit a *Conversation* which had appeared elsewhere.

XXI. LA FONTAINE AND DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULT.[1]

La Fontaine. I am truly sensible of the honor I receive, M. de la Rochefoucault, in a visit from a personage so distinguished by his birth and by his genius. Pardon my ambition, if I confess to you that I have long and ardently wished for the good fortune, which I never could promise myself, of knowing you personally.

Rochefoucault. My dear M. de la Fontaine!

La Fontaine. Not "*de* la," not "*de* la." I am *La* Fontaine purely and simply.

Rochefoucault. The whole; not derivative. You appear, in the midst of your purity, to have been educated at court, in the lap of the ladies. What was the last day (pardon!) I had the misfortune to miss you there?

La Fontaine. I never go to court. They say one cannot go without silk stockings; and I have only thread,—plenty of them indeed, thank God! Yet (would you believe it?) Nanon, in putting a *solette* to the bottom of one, last week, sewed it so carelessly she made a kind of cord across; and I verily believe it will lame me for life, for I walked the whole morning upon it.

Rochefoucault. She ought to be whipped.

La Fontaine. I thought so too, and grew the warmer at being unable to find a wisp of osier or a roll of packthread in the house. Barely had I begun with my garter, when in came the Bishop of Grasse, my old friend Godeau, and another lord, whose name he mentioned; and they both interceded for her so long and so touchingly, that at last I was fain to let her rise up and go. I never saw men look down on the erring and afflicted more compassionately. The bishop was quite concerned for me also. But the other, although he professed to feel even more, and said that it must surely be the pain of purgatory to me, took

[1 The date of this Conversation, which is strictly "Imaginary," can be fixed. In 1679 La Fontaine went to Court to present a copy of his works to the King, and forgot the book. Rochefoucault died in the year 1680. The Conversation is one of the best. Both the characters are well kept up, and there is very little Theology. (Works, ii., 1846. Works, v., 1876.)]

a pinch of snuff, opened his waistcoat, drew down his ruffles, and seemed rather more indifferent.

Rochefoucault. Providentially, in such moving scenes, the worst is soon over. But Godeau's friend was not too sensitive.

La Fontaine. Sensitive! no more than if he had been educated at the butcher's or the Sorbonne.

Rochefoucault. I am afraid there are as many hard hearts under satin waistcoats, as there are ugly visages under the same material in miniature-cases.

La Fontaine. My lord, I could show you a miniature-case which contains your humble servant, in which the painter has done what no tailor in his senses would do: he has given me credit for a coat of violet silk, with silver frogs as large as tortoises. But I am loath to get up for it while the generous heart of this dog (if I mentioned his name, he would jump up) places such confidence on my knee.

Rochefoucault. Pray do not move on any account; above all, lest you should disturb that amiable gray cat, fast asleep in his innocence on your shoulder.

La Fontaine. Ah, rogue! art thou there? Why, thou hast not licked my face this half-hour!

Rochefoucault. And more too, I should imagine. I do not judge from his somnolency, which if he were president of the Parliament could not be graver, but from his natural sagacity. Cats weigh practicabilities. What sort of tongue has he?

La Fontaine. He has the roughest tongue and the tenderest heart of any cat in Paris. If you observe the color of his coat, it is rather blue than grey,—a certain indication of goodness in these contemplative creatures.

Rochefoucault. We were talking of his tongue alone; by which cats, like men, are flatterers.

La Fontaine. Ah! you gentlemen of the court are much mistaken in thinking that vices have so extensive a range. There are some of our vices, like some of our diseases, from which the quadrupeds are exempt; and those, both diseases and vices, are the most discreditable.

Rochefoucault. I do not bear patiently any evil spoken of the court; for it must be acknowledged, by the most malicious, that the court is the purifier of the whole nation.

La Fontaine. I know little of the court, and less of the whole nation; but how can this be?

Rochefoucault. It collects all ramblers and gamblers; all the market-men and market-women who deal in articles which God has thrown into their baskets, without any trouble on their part; all the seducers, and all who wish to be seduced; all the duellists who erase their crimes with their swords, and sweat out their cowardice with daily practice; all the nobles whose patents of nobility lie in gold snuff-boxes, or have worn Mechlin ruffles, or are deposited within the archives of knee-deep waistcoats; all stock-jobbers and church-jobbers, the black-legged and the red-legged game, the flower of the *justaucorps*, the *robe*, and the *soutane*. If these were spread over the surface of France, instead of close compressure in the court or cabinet, they would corrupt the whole country in two years. As matters now stand, it will require a quarter of a century to effect it.

La Fontaine. Am I not right, then, in preferring my beasts to yours? But if yours were loose, mine (as you prove to me) would be the last to suffer by it, poor dear creatures! Speaking of cats, I would have avoided all personality that might be offensive to them: I would not exactly have said in so many words, that, by their tongues, they are flatterers, like men. Language may take a turn advantageously in favor of our friends. True, we resemble all animals in something. I am quite ashamed and mortified that your lordship, or anybody, should have had the start of me in this reflection. When a cat flatters with his tongue, he is not insincere: you may safely take it for a real kindness. He is loyal, M. de la Rochefoucault! my word for him, he is loyal. Observe, too, if you please, no cat ever licks you when he wants anything from you; so that there is nothing of baseness in such an act of adulation, if we must call it so. For my part, I am slow to designate by so foul a name that (be it what it may) which is subsequent to a kindness. Cats ask plainly for what they want.

Rochefoucault. And, if they cannot get it by protocols, they get it by invasion and assault.

La Fontaine. No! no! usually they go elsewhere, and fondle those from whom they obtain it. In this I see no resemblance to invaders and conquerors. I draw no parallels: I would

excite no heart-burnings between us and them. Let all have their due.

I do not like to lift this creature off, for it would waken him, else I could find out, by some subsequent action, the reason why he has not been on the elert to lick my cheek for so long a time.

Rochefoucault. Cats are wary and provident. He would not enter into any contest with you, however friendly. He only licks your face, I presume, while your beard is but a match for his tongue.

La Fontaine. Ha! you remind me. Indeed, I did begin to think my beard was rather of the roughest; for yesterday Madame de Rambouillet sent me a plate of strawberries, the first of the season, and raised (would you believe it?) under glass. One of these strawberries was dropping from my lips, and I attempted to stop it. When I thought it had fallen to the ground, "Look for it, Nanon; pick it up and eat it," said I.

"Master!" cried the wench, "your beard has skewered and spitted it."—"Honest girl," I answered, "come cull it from the bed of its adoption."

I had resolved to shave myself this morning; but our wisest and best resolutions too often come to nothing, poor mortals!

Rochefoucault. We often do very well every thing but the only thing we hope to do best of all; and our projects often drop from us by their weight. A little while ago, your friend Molière exhibited a remarkable proof of it.

La Fontaine. Ah, poor Molière! the best man in the world; but flighty, negligent, thoughtless. He throws himself into other men, and does not remember where. The sight of an eagle, M. de la Rochefoucault, but the memory of a fly!

Rochefoucault. I will give you an example; but perhaps it is already known to you.

La Fontaine. Likely enough. We have each so many friends, neither of us can trip but the other is invited to the laugh. Well, I am sure he has no malice, and I hope I have none; but who can see his own faults?

Rochefoucault. He had brought out a new edition of his *Comedies.*

La Fontaine. There will be fifty; there will be a hundred: nothing in our language, or in any, is so delightful, so graceful,—I will add, so clear at once and so profound.

Rochefoucault. You are among the few who, seeing well his other qualities, see that Molière is also profound. In order to present the new edition to the Dauphin, he had put on a sky-blue velvet coat, powdered with fleur-de-lis. He laid the volume on his library-table; and, resolving that none of the courtiers should have an opportunity of ridiculing him for any thing like absence of mind, he returned to his bed-room, which, as may often be the case in the economy of poets, is also his dressing-room. Here he surveyed himself in his mirror, as well as the creeks and lagoons in it would permit.

La Fontaine. I do assure you, from my own observation, M. de la Rochefoucault, that his mirror is a splendid one. I should take it to be nearly three feet high, reckoning the frame with the Cupid above and the elephant under. I suspected it was the present of some great lady; and, indeed, I have since heard as much.

Rochefoucault. Perhaps, then, the whole story may be quite as fabulous as the part of it which I have been relating.

La Fontaine. In that case, I may be able to set you right again.

Rochefoucault. He found his peruke a model of perfection: tight, yet easy; not an inch more on one side than on the other. The black patch on the forehead—

La Fontaine. Black patch, too! I would have given a fifteen-sous piece to have caught him with that black patch.

Rochefoucault. He found it lovely, marvellous, irresistible. Those on each cheek—

La Fontaine. Do you tell me he had one on each cheek?

Rochefoucault. Symmetrically. The cravat was of its proper descent, and with its appropriate charge of the best Strasburg snuff upon it. The waistcoat, for a moment, puzzled and perplexed him. He was not quite sure whether the right number of buttons were in their holes; nor how many above nor how many below it was the fashion of the week to leave without occupation. Such a piece of ignorance is enough to disgrace any courtier on earth. He was in the act of striking his forehead

with desperation; but he thought of the patch, fell on his knees, and thanked Heaven for the intervention.

La Fontaine. Just like him! just like him! good soul!

Rochefoucault. The breeches—ah! those require attention: all proper; every thing in its place,—magnificent! The stockings rolled up, neither too loosely nor too negligently,—a picture! The buckles in the shoes—all but one—soon set to rights,—well thought of! And now the sword,—ah, that cursed sword! it will bring at least one man to the ground if it has its own way much longer.—Up with it! up with it higher!—*Allons!* we are out of danger.

La Fontaine. Delightful! I have him before my eyes. What simplicity! ay, what simplicity!

Rochefoucault. Now for hat. Feather in? Five at least. Bravo.

He took up hat and plumage, extended his arm to the full length, raised it a foot above his head, lowered it thereon, opened his fingers, and let them fall again at his side.

La Fontaine. Something of the comedian in that; ay, M. de la Rochefoucault? But, on the stage or off, all is natural in Molière.

Rochefoucault. Away he went. He reached the palace, stood before the Dauphin.—Oh, consternation! Oh, despair! "Morbleu! bête que je suis," exclaimed the hapless man, "le livre, où donc est-il?" You are forcibly struck, I perceive, by this adventure of your friend.

La Fontaine. Strange coincidence! quite unaccountable! There are agents at work in our dreams, M. de la Rochefoucault, which we shall never see out of them, on this side the grave. [*To himself.*] Sky-blue? No.—Fleurs de-lis? Bah! bah!—Patches? I never wore one in my life.

Rochefoucault. It well becomes your character for generosity, M. la Fontaine, to look grave and ponder and ejaculate on a friend's untoward accident, instead of laughing, as those who little know you might expect. I beg your pardon for relating the occurrence.

La Fontaine. Right or wrong, I cannot help laughing any longer. Comical, by my faith! above the tip-top of comedy. Excuse my flashes and dashes and rushes of merriment. In-

controllable! incontrollable! Indeed the laughter is immoderate. And you all the while are sitting as grave as a judge; I mean a criminal one, who has nothing to do but to keep up his popularity by sending his rogues to the gallows. The civil, indeed, have much weighty matter on their minds: they must displease one party; and sometimes a doubt arises whether the fairer hand or the fuller shall turn the balance.

Rochefoucault. I congratulate you on the return of your gravity and composure.

La Fontaine. Seriously now: all my lifetime I have been the plaything of dreams. Sometimes they have taken such possession of me, that nobody could persuade me afterward they were other than real events. Some are very oppressive, very painful, M. de la Rochefoucault! I have never been able, altogether, to disembarrass my head of the most wonderful vision that ever took possession of any man's. There are some truly important differences; but in many respects this laughable adventure of my innocent, honest friend, Molière, seemed to have befallen myself. I can only account for it by having heard the tale when I was half-asleep.

Rochefoucault. Nothing more probable.

La Fontaine. You absolutely have relieved me from an incubus.

Rochefoucault. I do not yet see how.

La Fontaine. No longer ago than when you entered this chamber, I would have sworn that I myself had gone to the Louvre, that I myself had been commanded to attend the Dauphin, that I myself had come into his presence,* had fallen on my knee, and cried, "Peste! où est donc le livre!" Ah, M. de la Rochefoucault! permit me to embrace you: this is really to find a friend at court.

Rochefoucault. My visit is even more auspicious than I could have ventured to expect: it was chiefly for the purpose of asking your permission to make another at my return to Paris. I am forced to go into the country on some family affairs; but, hearing that you have spoken favorably of my *Maxims*, I presume to express my satisfaction and delight at your good opinion.

La Fontaine. Pray, M. de la Rochefoucault, do me the

* This happened.

favor to continue here a few minutes: I would gladly reason with you on some of your doctrines.

Rochefoucault. For the pleasure of hearing your sentiments on the topics I have treated, I will, although it is late, steal a few minutes from the court, of which I must take my leave on parting for the province.

La Fontaine. Are you quite certain that all your Maxims are true, or, what is of greater consequence, that they are all original? I have lately read a treatise written by an Englishman, M. Hobbes; so loyal a man that, while others tell you kings are appointed by God, he tells you God is appointed by kings.

Rochefoucault. Ah! such are precisely the men we want. If he establishes this verity, the rest will follow.

La Fontaine. He does not seem to care so much about the rest. In his treatise I find the ground-plan of your chief positions.

Rochefoucault. I have indeed looked over his publication; and we agree on the natural depravity of man.

La Fontaine. Reconsider your expression. It appears to me that what is natural is not depraved,—that depravity is deflection from nature. Let it pass: I cannot, however, concede to you that the generality of men are naturally bad. Badness is accidental, like disease. We find more tempers good than bad, where proper care is taken in proper time.

Rochefoucault. Care is not nature.

La Fontaine. Nature is soon inoperative without it; so soon, indeed, as to allow no opportunity for experiment or hypothesis. Life itself requires care, and more continually than tempers and morals do. The strongest body ceases to be a body in a few days without a supply of food. When we speak of men as being naturally bad or good, we mean susceptible and retentive and communicative of them. In this case (and there can be no other true or ostensible one), I believe that the more are good; and nearly in the same proportion as there are animals and plants produced healthy and vigorous than wayward and weakly. Strange is the opinion of M. Hobbes, that, when God hath poured so abundantly his benefits on other creatures, the only one capable of great good should be uniformly disposed to greater evil.

Rochefoucault. Yet Holy Writ, to which Hobbes would reluctantly appeal, countenances the supposition.

La Fontaine. The Jews, above all nations, were morose and splenetic. Nothing is holy to me that lessens in my view the beneficence of my Creator. If you could show him ungentle and unkind in a single instance, you would render myriads of men so throughout the whole course of their lives, and those too among the most religious. The less that people talk about God, the better. He has left us a design to fill up. He has placed the canvas, the colors, and the pencils within reach; his directing hand is over ours incessantly; it is our business to follow it, and neither to turn round and argue with our master, nor to kiss and fondle him. We must mind our lesson, and not neglect our time: for the room is closed early, and the lights are suspended in another, where no one works. If every man would do all the good he might within an hour's walk from his house, he would live the happier and the longer; for nothing is so conducive to longevity as the union of activity and content. But, like children, we deviate from the road, however well we know it, and run into mire and puddles in despite of frown and ferule.

Rochefoucault. Go on, M. la Fontaine! pray go on. We are walking in the same labyrinth, always within call, always within sight of each other. We set out at its two extremities, and shall meet at last.

La Fontaine. I doubt it. From deficiency of care proceed many vices, both in men and children, and more still from care taken improperly. M. Hobbes attributes not only the order and peace of society, but equity and moderation and every other virtue, to the coercion and restriction of the laws. The laws, as now constituted, do a great deal of good; they also do a great deal of mischief. They transfer more property from the right owner in six months than all the thieves of the kingdom do in twelve. What the thieves take, they soon desseminate abroad again; what the laws take, they hoard. The thief takes a part of your property; he who prosecutes the thief for you takes another part; he who condemns the thief goes to the tax-gatherer and takes the third. Power has been hitherto occupied in no employment but in keeping down wisdom. Perhaps the time may come when wisdom shall exert her energy in repressing the sallies of power.

Rochefoucault. I think it more probable that they will agree; that they will call together their servants of all liveries, to collect what they can lay their hands upon; and that meanwhile they will sit together like good housewives, making nets from our purses to cover the coop for us. If you would be plump and in feather, pick up your millet and be quiet in your darkness. Speculate on nothing here below, and I promise you a nosegay in Paradise.

La Fontaine. Believe me, I shall be most happy to receive it there at your hands, my lord duke.

The greater number of men, I am inclined to think, with all the defects of education, all the frauds committed on their credulity, all the advantages taken of their ignorance and supineness, are disposed, on most occasions, rather to virtue than to vice, rather to the kindly affections than the unkindly, rather to the social than the selfish.

Rochefoucault. Here we differ; and, were my opinion the same as yours, my book would be little read and less commended.

La Fontaine. Why think so?

Rochefoucault. For this reason. Every man likes to hear evil of all men; every man is delighted to take the air of the common, though not a soul will consent to stand within his own allotment. No inclosure-act! no finger-posts! You may call every creature under heaven fool and rogue, and your auditor will join with you heartily: hint to him the slightest of his own defects or foibles, and he draws the rapier. You and he are the judges of the world, but not its denizens.

La Fontaine. M. Hobbes has taken advantage of these weaknesses. In his dissertation, he betrays the timidity and malice of his character. It must be granted he reasons well, according to the view he has taken of things; but he has given no proof whatever that his view is a correct one. I will believe that it is, when I am persuaded that sickness is the natural state of the body, and health the unnatural. If you call him a sound philosopher, you may call a mummy a sound man. Its darkness, its hardness, its forced uprightness, and the place in which you find it, may commend it to you; give me rather some weakness and peccability, with vital warmth and human sympathies. A shrewd reasoner is one thing; a sound philosopher is another.

I admire your power and precision. Monks will admonish us how little the author of the *Maxims* knows of the world; and heads of colleges will cry out, "A libel on human nature!" but when they hear your titles, and, above all, your credit at court, they will cast back cowl and peruke, and lick your boots. You start with great advantages. Throwing off from a dukedom, you are sure of enjoying, if not the tongue of these puzzlers, the full cry of the more animating, and will certainly be as long-lived as the imperfection of our language will allow. I consider your *Maxims* as a broken ridge of hills, on the shady side of which you are fondest of taking your exercise; but the same ridge hath also a sunny one. You attribute (let me say it again) all actions to self-interest. Now a sentiment of interest must be preceded by calculation, long or brief, right or erroneous. Tell me, then, in what region lies the origin of that pleasure which a family in the country feels on the arrival of an unexpected friend. I say a family in the country; because the sweetest souls, like the sweetest flowers, soon canker in cities, and no purity is rarer there than the purity of delight: if I may judge from the few examples I have been in a position to see, no earthly one can be greater. There are pleasures which lie near the surface, and which are blocked up by artificial ones, or are diverted by some mechanical scheme, or are confined by some stiff evergreen vista of low advantage. But these pleasures do occasionally burst forth in all their brightness; and, if ever you shall by chance find one of them, you will sit by it, I hope, complacently and cheerfully, and turn toward it the kindliest aspect of your meditations.

Rochefoucault. Many, indeed most people, will differ from me. Nothing is quite the same to the intellect of any two men, much less of all. When one says to another, "I am entirely of your opinion," he uses in general an easy and indifferent phrase, believing in its accuracy without examination, without thought. The nearest resemblance in opinions, if we could trace every line of it, would be found greatly more divergent than the nearest in the human form or countenance, and in the same proportion as the varieties of mental qualities are more numerous and fine than of the bodily. Hence, I do not expect nor wish that my opinions should in all cases be

similar to those of others; but in many I shall be gratified if, by just degrees and after a long survey, those of others approximate to mine. Nor does this my sentiment spring from a love of power, as in many good men quite unconsciously, when they would make proselytes,—since I shall see few and converse with fewer of them, and profit in no way by their adherence and favor,—but it springs from a natural and a cultivated love of all truths whatever, and from a certainty that these delivered by me are conducive to the happiness and dignity of man. You shake your head.

La Fontaine. Make it out.

Rochefoucault. I have pointed out to him at what passes he hath deviated from his true interest, and where he hath mistaken selfishness for generosity, coldness for judgment, contraction of heart for policy, rank for merit, pomp for dignity,—of all mistakes, the commonest and the greatest. I am accused of paradox and distortion. On paradox I shall only say that every new moral truth has been called so. Inexperienced and negligent observers see no difference in the operations of ravelling and unravelling: they never come close enough; they despise plain work.

La Fontaine. The more we simplify things, the better we descry their substances and qualities. A good writer will not coil them up and press them into the narrowest possible space, nor macerate them into such particles that nothing shall be remaining of their natural contexture. You are accused of this too, by such as have forgotten your title-page, and who look for treatises where maxims only have been promised. Some of them, perhaps, are spinning out sermons and dissertations from the poorest paragraph in the volume.

Rochefoucault. Let them copy and write as they please; against or for, modestly or impudently. I have hitherto had no assailant who is not of too slender a make to be detained an hour in the stocks he has unwarily put his foot into. If you hear of any, do not tell of them. On the subjects of my remarks, had others thought as I do, my labor would have been spared me. I am ready to point out the road where I know it to whosoever wants it; but I walk side by side with few or none.

La Fontaine. We usually like those roads which show us the

fronts of our friends' houses and the pleasure-grounds about them, and the smooth garden-walks, and the trim espaliers, and look at them with more satisfaction than at the docks and nettles that are thrown in heaps behind. The *Offices* of Cicero are imperfect: yet who would not rather guide his children by them than by the line and compass of harder-handed guides; such as Hobbes, for instance?

Rochefoucault. Imperfect as some gentlemen in hoods may call the *Offices*, no founder of a philosophical or of a religious sect has been able to add to them any thing important.

La Fontaine. Pity, that Cicero carried with him no better authorities than reason and humanity! He neither could work miracles, nor damn you for disbelieving them. Had he lived fourscore years later, who knows but he might have been another Simon Peter, and have talked Hebrew as fluently as Latin, all at once! Who knows but we might have heard of his patrimony! Who knows but our venerable popes might have claimed dominion from him, as descendant from the kings of Rome!

Rochefoucault. The hint, some centuries ago, would have made your fortune, and that saintly cat there would have kittened in a mitre.

La Fontaine. Alas! the hint could have done nothing: Cicero could not have lived later.

Rochefoucault. I warrant him. Nothing is easier to correct than chronology. There is not a lady in Paris, nor a jockey in Normandy, that is not eligible to a professor's chair in it. I have seen a man's ancestor, whom nobody ever saw before, spring back over twenty generations. Our Vatican Jupiters have as little respect for old Chronos as the Cretan had: they mutilate him when and where they think necessary, limp as he may by the operation.

La Fontaine. When I think, as you make me do, how ambitious men are, even those whose teeth are too loose (one would fancy) for a bite at so hard an apple as the devil of ambition offers them, I am inclined to believe that we are actuated not so much by selfishness as you represent it, but under another form,—the love of power. Not to speak of territorial dominion or political office, and such other things as we usually class under its appurtenances, do we not desire an exclusive control over what is

beautiful and lovely,—the possession of pleasant fields, of well-situated houses, of cabinets, of images, of pictures, and indeed of many things pleasant to see but useless to possess; even of rocks, of streams, and of fountains? These things, you will tell me, have their utility. True, but not to the wisher; nor does the idea of it enter his mind. Do not we wish that the object of our love should be devoted to us only; and that our children should love us better than their brothers and sisters, or even than the mother who bore them? Love would be arrayed in the purple robe of sovereignty, mildly as he may resolve to exercise his power.

Rochefoucault. Many things which appear to be incontrovertible are such for their age only, and must yield to others which, in their age, are equally so. There are only a few points that are always above the waves. Plain truths, like plain dishes, are commended by everybody, and everybody leaves them whole. If it were not even more impertinent and presumptuous to praise a great writer in his presence than to censure him in his absence, I would venture to say that your prose, from the few specimens you have given of it, is equal to your verse. Yet, even were I the possessor of such a style as yours, I would never employ it to support my *Maxims*. You would think a writer very impudent and self-sufficient who should quote his own works: to defend them is doing more. We are the worst auxiliaries in the world to the opinions we have brought into the field. Our business is o measure the ground, and to calculate the forces; then let them ry their strength. If the weak assails me, he thinks me weak; f the strong, he thinks me strong. He is more likely to compute ill his own vigor than mine. At all events, I love inquiry, even when I myself sit down. And I am not offended in my walks f my visitor asks me whither does that alley lead? It proves hat he is ready to go on with me; that he sees some space before him; and that he believes there may be something worth looking after.

La Fontaine. You have been standing a long time, my lord duke: I must entreat you to be seated.

Rochefoucault. Excuse me, my dear M. la Fontaine; I would much rather stand.

La Fontaine. Mercy on us! have you been upon your legs ever since you rose to leave me?

Rochefoucault. A change of position is agreeable: a friend always permits it.

La Fontaine. Sad doings! sad oversight! The other two chairs were sent yesterday evening to be scoured and mended. But that dog is the best-tempered dog, an angel of a dog, I do assure you: he would have gone down in a moment, at a word. I am quite ashamed of myself for such inattention. With your sentiments of friendship for me, why could you not have taken the liberty to shove him gently off, rather than give me this uneasiness?

Rochefoucault. My true and kind friend! we authors are too sedentary; we are heartily glad of standing to converse, whenever we can do it without any restraint on our acquaintance.

La Fontaine. I must reprove that animal when he uncurls his body. He seems to be dreaming of Paradise and Houris. Ay, twitch thy ear, my child! I wish at my heart there were as troublesome a fly about the other: God forgive me! The rogue covers all my clean linen!—shirt and cravat! What cares he!

Rochefoucault. Dogs are not very modest.

La Fontaine. Never say that, M. de la Rochefoucault! The most modest people upon earth! Look at a dog's eyes; and he half-closes them, or gently turns them away, with a motion of the lips, which he licks languidly, and of the tail, which he stirs tremulously, begging your forbearance. I am neither blind nor indifferent to the defects of these good and generous creatures. They are subject to many such as men are subject to: among the rest, they disturb the neighborhood in the discussion of their private causes; they quarrel and fight on small motives, such as a little bad food, or a little vain-glory, or the sex. But it must be something present or near that excites them; and they calculate not the extent of evil they may do or suffer.

Rochefoucault. Certainly not: how should dogs calculate?

La Fontaine. I know nothing of the process. I am unable to inform you how they leap over hedges and brooks, with exertion just sufficient, and no more. In regard to honor and a sense of dignity, let me tell you, a dog accepts the subsidies of his friends, but never claims them. A dog would not take the field to obtain power for a son, but would leave the son to obtain it by his own activity and prowess. He conducts his visitor or inmate

out a-hunting, and makes a present of the game to him as freely as an emperor to an elector. Fond as he is of slumber,—which is indeed one of the pleasantest and best things in the universe, particularly after dinner,—he shakes it off as willingly as he would a gadfly, in order to defend his master from theft or violence. Let the robber or assailant speak as courteously as he may, he waives your diplomatical terms, gives his reasons in plain language, and makes war. I could say many other things to his advantage; but I never was malicious, and would rather let both parties plead for themselves: give me the dog, however.

Rochefoucault. Faith! I will give you both, and never boast of my largess in so doing.

La Fontaine. I trust I have removed from you the suspicion of selfishness in my client, and I feel it quite as easy to make a properer disposal of another ill attribute,—namely, cruelty,—which we vainly try to shuffle off our own shoulders upon others, by employing the offensive and most unjust term "brutality." But to convince you of my impartiality, now I have defended the dog from the first obloquy, I will defend the man from the last, hoping to make you think better of each. What you attribute to cruelty, both while we are children and afterward, may be assigned for the greater part to curiosity. Cruelty tends to the extinction of life, the dissolution of matter, the imprisonment and sepulture of truth; and, if it were our ruling and chief propensity, the human race would have been extinguished in a few centuries after its appearance. Curiosity, in its primary sense, implies care and consideration.

Rochefoucault. Words often deflect from their primary sense. We find the most curious men the most idle and silly, the least observant and conservative.

La Fontaine. So we think, because we see every hour the idly curious, and not the strenuously; we see only the persons of the one set, and only the works of the other.

More is heard of cruelty than of curiosity, because, while curiosity is silent both in itself and about its object, cruelty on most occasions is like the wind,—boisterous in itself, and exciting a murmur and bustle in all the things it moves among. Added to which, many of the higher topics, whereto our curiosity would turn, are intercepted from it by the policy of our

guides and rulers; while the principal ones on which cruelty is most active are pointed to by the sceptre and the truncheon, and wealth and dignity are the rewards of their attainment. What perversion! He who brings a bullock into a city for its sustenance is called a butcher, and nobody has the civility to take off the hat to him, although knowing him as perfectly as I know Matthieu le Mince, who served me with those fine kidneys you must have remarked in passing through the kitchen: on the contrary, he who reduces the same city to famine is styled M. le General, or M. le Marechal; and gentlemen like you, unprejudiced (as one would think) and upright, make room for him in the antechamber.

Rochefoucault. He obeys orders, without the degrading influence of any passion.

La Fontaine. Then he commits a baseness the more, a cruelty the greater. He goes off at another man's setting, as ingloriously as a rat-trap: he produces the worst effects of fury, and feels none, — a Cain unirritated by a brother's incense.

Rochefoucault. I would hide from you this little rapier, which, like the barber's pole, I have often thought too obtrusive in the streets.

La Fontaine. Never shall I think my countrymen half civilized, while on the dress of a courtier is hung the instrument of a cut-throat. How deplorably feeble must be that honor which requires defending at every hour of the day!

Rochefoucault. Ingenious as you are, M. la Fontaine, I do not believe that, on this subject, you could add any thing to what you have spoken already; but, really, I do think one of the most instructive things in the world would be a dissertation on dress by you.

La Fontaine. Nothing can be devised more commodious than the dress in fashion. Perukes have fallen among us by the peculiar dispensation of Providence. As in all the regions of the globe the indigenous have given way to stronger creatures, so have they (partly at least) on the human head. At present the wren and the squirrel are dominant there. Whenever I have a mind for a filbert, I have only to shake my foretop. Improvement does not end in that quarter. I might forget to take my

pinch of snuff when it would do me good, unless I saw a store of it on another's cravat. Furthermore, the slit in the coat behind tells in a moment what it was made for,—a thing of which, in regard to ourselves, the best preachers have to remind us all our lives. Then the central part of our habiliment has either its loophole or its portcullis in the opposite direction, still more demonstrative. All these are for very mundane purposes; but religion and humanity have whispered some later utilities. We pray the more commodiously, and of course the more frequently, for rolling up a royal ell of stocking round about our knees; and our high-heeled shoes must surely have been worn by some angel, to save those insects which the flat-footed would have crushed to death.

Rochefoucault. Ah! the good dog has awakened: he saw me and my rapier, and ran away. Of what breed is he? for I know nothing of dogs.

La Fontaine. And write so well!

Rochefoucault. Is he a trufler?

La Fontaine. No, not he; but quite as innocent.

Rochefoucault. Something of the shepherd-dog, I suspect?

La Fontaine. Nor that neither; although he fain would make you believe it. Indeed, he is very like one: pointed nose, pointed ears, apparently stiff, but readily yielding; long hair, particularly about the neck; noble tail over his back, three curls deep, exceedingly pleasant to stroke down again; straw-color all above, white all below. He might take it ill if you looked for it; but so it is, upon my word. An ermeline might envy it.

Rochefoucault. What are his pursuits?

La Fontaine. As to pursuit and occupation, he is good for nothing. In fact, I like those dogs best,—and those men too.

Rochefoucault. Send Nanon, then, for a pair of silk stockings, and mount my carriage with me: it stops at the Louvre.

XXII. MELANCTHON AND CALVIN.[1]

Calvin. Are you sure, O Melancthon, that you yourself are among the elect?

Melancthon. My dear brother, so please it God, I would rather be among the many.

Calvin. Of the damned?

Melancthon. Alas! no. But I am inclined to believe that the many will be saved and will be happy, since Christ came into the world for the redemption of sinners.

Calvin. Hath not our Saviour said explicitly that many are called, but few chosen?

Melancthon. Our Saviour?—hath he said it?

Calvin. *Hath* he, forsooth! Where is your New Testament?

Melancthon. In my heart.

Calvin. Without this page, however.

Melancthon. When we are wiser and more docile, that is, when we are above the jars and turmoils and disputations of the world,—our Saviour will vouchsafe to interpret what, through the fumes of our intemperate vanity, is now indistinct or dark. He will plead for us before no inexorable judge. He came to remit the sins of man; not the sins of a few, but of many; not the sins of many, but of all.

Calvin. What! of the benighted heathen too?—of the pagan? of the idolater?

Melancthon. I hope so; but I dare not say it.

Calvin. You would include even the negligent, the indifferent, the sceptic, the unbeliever.

Melancthon. Pitying them for a want of happiness in a want of faith. They are my brethren; they are God's children. He will pardon the presumption of my wishes for their welfare; my sorrow that they have fallen, some through their blindness, others through their deafness, others through their terror, others through their anger peradventure at the loud denunciations of unforgiving man. If I would forgive a brother, may not he, who is im-

[1 Works, ii., 1846. Works, v., 1876.]

measurably better and more merciful, have pity on a child? He came on earth to take our nature upon him: will he punish, will he reprehend us, for an attempt to take as much as may be of his upon ourselves?

Calvin. There is no bearing any such fallacies.

Melancthon. Is it harder to bear these fallacies (as they appear to you, and perhaps are, for we all are fallible, and many even of our best thoughts are fallacies),—is it harder, O my friend, to bear these, than to believe in the eternal punishment of the erroneous?

Calvin. *Erroneous*, indeed! Have they not the Book of Life, now at last laid open before them, for their guidance?

Melancthon. No, indeed; they have only two or three places, dog-eared and bedaubed, which they are commanded to look into and study. These are so uninviting that many close again the volume of salvation, clasp it tight, and throw it back in our faces.

I would rather show a man green fields than gibbets; and, if I called him to enter the service of a plenteous house and powerful master, he may not be rendered the more willing to enter it by my pointing out to him the stocks in the gateway, and telling him that nine-tenths of the household, however orderly, must occupy that position. The book of *good news*, under your interpretation, tells people not only that they *may* go and be damned, but that, unless they are lucky, they *must* inevitably. Again, it informs another set of inquirers that, if once they have been under what they feel to be the influence of grace, they never can relapse. All must go well who have once gone well; and a name once written in the list of favorites can never be erased.

Calvin. This is certain.

Melancthon. Let us hope, then, and in holy confidence let us believe, that the book is large and voluminous; that it begins at an early date of man's existence; and that, amid the agitation of inquiry, it comprehends the humble and submissive doubter. For doubt itself, between the richest patrimony and utter destitution, is quite sufficiently painful; and surely it is a hardship to be turned over into a criminal court for having lost in a civil one. But if all who have once gone right can never go astray, how happens it that so large a part of the angels fell off from their allegiance? They were purer and wiser than we are,

and had the advantage of seeing God face to face. They were the ministers of his power; they knew its extent, yet they defied it. If we err, it is in relying too confidently on his mercies, not in questioning his omnipotence. If our hopes forsake us, if the bonds of sin bruise and corrode us, so that we cannot walk upright, there is, in the midst of these calamities, no proof that we are utterly lost. Danger far greater is there in the presumption of an especial favor, which men incomparably better than ourselves can never have deserved. Let us pray, O Calvin, that we may hereafter be happier than our contentions and animosities will permit us to be at present; and that our opponents, whether now in the right or in the wrong, may come at last where all error ceases.

Calvin. I am uncertain whether such a wish is rational; and I doubt more whether it is religious. God hath willed them to walk in their blindness. To hope against it, seems like repining at his unalterable decree,—a weak indulgence in an unpermitted desire; an unholy entreaty of the heart that he will forego his vengeance, and abrogate the law that was from the beginning. One thing I am certain: we must lop off the unsound.

Melancthon. What a curse hath metaphor been to religion! It is the wedge that holds asunder the two great portions of the Christian world. We hear of nothing so commonly as fire and sword. And here, indeed, what was metaphor is converted into substance and applied to practice. The unsoundness of doctrine is not cut off nor cauterised; the professor is. The head falls on the scaffold, or fire surrounds the stake, because a doctrine is bloodless and incombustible. Fierce, outrageous animals, for want of the man who has escaped them, lacerate and trample his cloak or bonnet. This, although the work of brutes, is not half so brutal as the practice of theologians,—seizing the man himself, instead of bonnet or cloak.

Calvin. We must leave such matters to the magistrate.

Melancthon. Let us instruct the magistrate in his duty: this is ours. Unless we can teach humanity, we may resign the charge of religion. For fifteen centuries, Christianity has been conveyed into many houses, in many cities, in many regions, but always through slender pipes; and never yet into any great reservoir in any part of the earth. Its principal ordinances have never been

observed in the polity of any State whatever. Abstinence from spoliation, from oppression, from bloodshed, has never been inculcated by the chief priests of any. These two facts excite the doubts of many in regard to a Divine origin and a Divine protection. Wherefore, it behooves us the more especially to preach forbearance. If the people are tolerant one toward another in the same country, they will become tolerant in time toward those whom rivers or seas have separated from them. For, surely, it is strange and wonderful that nations which are near enough for hostility should never be near enough for concord. This arises from bad government; and bad government arises from a negligent choice of counsellors by the prince, usually led or terrified by a corrupt, ambitious, wealthy (and therefore un-Christian) priesthood. While their wealth lay beyond the visible horizon, they tarried at the cottage, instead of pricking on for the palace.

Calvin. By the grace and help of God, we will turn them back again to their quiet and wholesome resting-place, before the people lay a rough hand upon the silk.

But you evaded my argument on predestination.

Melancthon. Our blessed Lord himself, in his last hours, ventured to express a wish before his Heavenly Father that the bitter cup might pass away from him. I humbly dare to implore that a cup much bitterer may be removed from the great body of mankind,—a cup containing the poison of eternal punishment, where agony succeeds to agony, but never death.

Calvin. I come armed with the gospel.

Melancthon. Tremendous weapon!—as we have seen it through many ages, if man wields it against man; but, like the fabled spear of old mythology, endued with the faculty of healing the saddest wound its most violent wielder can inflict. Obscured and rusting with the blood upon it, let us hasten to take it up again, and apply it, as best we may, to its appointed uses.

The life of our Saviour is the simplest exposition of his words. Strife is what he both discountenanced and forbade. We ourselves are right-minded, each of us all; and others are right-minded in proportion as they agree with us, chiefly in matters which we insist are well worthy of our adherence, but which whosoever refuses to embrace displays a factious and un-Christian spirit. These for the most part are matters which

neither they nor we understand, and which, if we did understand them, would little profit us. The weak will be supported by the strong, if they can; if they cannot, they are ready to be supported even by the weaker, and cry out against the strong as arrogant or negligent, or deaf or blind; at last, even their strength is questioned, and the more if, while there is fury all around them, they are quiet.

I remember no discussion on religion in which religion was not a sufferer by it, if mutual forbearance and belief in another's good motives and intentions are (as I must always think they are) its proper and necessary appurtenances.

Calvin. Would you never make inquiries?

Melancthon. Yes, and as deep as possible: but into my own heart; for that belongs to me, and God hath entrusted it most especially to my own superintendence.

Calvin. We must also keep others from going astray by showing them the right road, and, if they are obstinate in resistance, then by coercing and chastising them through the magistrate.

Melancthon. It is sorrowful to dream that we are scourges in God's hand, and that he appoints for us no better work than lacerating one another. I am no enemy to inquiry where I see abuses, and where I suspect falsehood. The Romanists, our great oppressors, think it presumptuous to search into things abstruse; and let us do them the justice to acknowledge that, if it is a fault, it is one which they never commit. But surely we are kept sufficiently in the dark by the infirmity of our nature: no need to creep into a corner and put our hands before our eyes. To throw away or turn aside from God's best gifts is verily a curious sign of obedience and submission. He not only hath given us a garden to walk in; but he hath planted it also for us, and he wills us to know the nature and properties of every thing that grows up within it. Unless we look into them and handle them and register them, how shall we discover this to be salutary, that to be poisonous; this annual, that perennial?

Calvin. Here we coincide; and I am pleased to find in you less apathy than I expected. It becomes us, moreover, to denounce God's vengeance on a sinful world.

Melancthon. Is it not better and pleasanter to show the wanderer by what course of life it may be avoided? Is it not better and pleasanter to enlarge on God's promises of salvation, than to insist on his denunciations of wrath? Is it not better and pleasanter to lead the wretched up to his mercy-seat, than to hurl them by thousands under his fiery chariot?

Calvin. We have no option. By our Heavenly Father many are called, but few are chosen.

Melancthon. There is scarcely a text in the Holy Scriptures to which there is not an opposite text, written in characters equally large and legible; and there has usually been a sword laid upon each. Even the weakest disputant is made so conceited by what he calls religion, as to think himself wiser than the wisest who thinks differently from him; and he becomes so ferocious by what he calls holding it fast, that he appears to me as if he held it fast much in the same manner as a terrier holds a rat, and you have about as much trouble in getting it from between his incisors. When at last it does come out, it is mangled, distorted, and extinct.

Calvin. M. Melancthon, you have taken a very perverse view of the subject. Such language as yours would extinguish that zeal which is to enlighten the nations, and to consume the tares by which they are overrun.

Melancthon. The tares and the corn are so intermingled throughout the wide plain which our God hath given us to cultivate, that I would rather turn the patient and humble into it to weed it carefully, than a thresher who would thresh wheat and tare together before the grain is ripened, or who would carry fire into the furrows when it is.

Calvin. Yet even the most gentle, and of the gentler sex, are inflamed with a holy zeal in the propagation of the faith.

Melancthon. I do not censure them for their earnestness in maintaining truth. We not only owe our birth to them, but also the better part of our education; and, if we were not divided after their first lesson, we should continue to live in a widening circle of brothers and sisters all our lives. After our infancy and removal from home, the use of the rod is the principal thing we learn of our alien preceptors; and, catching their dictatorial language, we soon begin to exercise their instru-

ment of enforcing it, and swing it right and left, even after we are paralyzed by age, and until death's hand strikes it out of ours. I am sorry you have cited the gentler part of the creation to appear before you, obliged as I am to bear witness that I myself have known a few specimens of the fair sex become a shade less fair among the perplexities of religion. Indeed, I am credibly informed that certain of them have lost their patience, running up and down in the dust where many roads diverge. This, surely, is not walking humbly with their God, nor walking with him at all; for those who walk with him are always readier to hear *his* voice than their own, and to admit that it is more persuasive. But at last the zealot is so infatuated, by the serious mockeries he imitates and repeats, that he really takes his own voice for God's. Is it not wonderful that the words of eternal life should have hitherto produced only eternal litigation; and that, in our progress heavenward, we should think it expedient to plant unthrifty thorns over bitter wells of blood in the wilderness we leave behind us?

Calvin. It appears to me that you are inclined to tolerate even the rank idolatry of our persecutors. Shame! shame!

Melancthon. Greater shame if I tolerated it within my own dark heart, and waved before it the foul incense of self-love.

Calvin. I do not understand you. What I do understand is this, and deny it at your peril,—I mean at the peril of your salvation,—that God is a jealous God: he himself declares it.

Melancthon. We are in the habit of considering the God of Nature as a jealous God, and idolatry as an enormous evil,—an evil which is about to come back into the world, and to subdue or seduce once more our strongest and most sublime affections. Why do you lift up your eyes and hands?

Calvin. An evil *about* to come back!—*about* to come! Do we not find it in high places?

Melancthon. We do indeed, and always shall, while there are any high places upon earth. Thither will men creep, and there fall prostrate.

Calvin. Against idolatry we still implore the Almighty that he will incline our hearts to keep his law.

Melancthon. The Jewish law; the Jewish idolatry: you fear the approach of this, and do not suspect the presence of a worse.

Calvin. A worse than that which the living God hath denounced?

Melancthon. Even so.

Calvin. Would it not offend, would it not wound to the quick, a mere human creature, to be likened to a piece of metal or stone, a calf or monkey?

Melancthon. A mere human creature might be angry; because his influence among his neighbours arises in great measure from the light in which he appears to them; and this light does not emanate from himself, but may be thrown on him by any hand that is expert at mischief. Beside, the likeness of such animals to him could never be suggested by reverence or esteem, nor be regarded as a type of any virtue. The mere human creature, such as human creatures for the most part are, would be angry; because he has nothing which he can oppose to ridicule but resentment.

Calvin. I am in consternation at your lukewarmness. If you treat idolaters thus lightly, what hope can I entertain of discussing with you the doctrine of grace and predestination?

Melancthon. Entertain no such hope at all. Wherever I find in the Holy Scriptures a disputable doctrine, I interpret it as judges do, in favor of the culprit; such is man. The benevolent judge is God. But, in regard to idolatry, I see more criminals who are guilty of it than you do. I go beyond the stone-quarry and the pasture, beyond the graven image and the ox-stall. If we bow before the distant image of good, while there exists within our reach one solitary object of substantial sorrow, which sorrow our efforts can remove, we are guilty (I pronounce it) of idolatry: we prefer the intangible effigy to the living form. Surely we neglect the service of our Maker, if we neglect his children. He left us in the chamber with them, to take care of them, to feed them, to admonish them, and occasionally to amuse them; instead of which, after a warning not to run into the fire, we slam the door behind us in their faces, and run eagerly downstairs to dispute and quarrel with our fellows of the household who are about their business. The wickedness of idolatry does not consist in any inadequate representation of the Deity; for, whether our hands or our hearts represent him, the representation is almost alike inadequate. Every man does what he hopes and

believes will be most pleasing to his God; and God, in his wisdom and mercy, will not punish gratitude in its error.

Calvin. How do you know that?

Melancthon. Because I know his loving-kindness, and experience it daily.

Calvin. If men blindly and wilfully run into error when God hath shown the right way, be will visit it on their souls.

Melancthon. He will observe from the serenity of heaven—a serenity emanating from his presence—that there is scarcely any work of his creation on earth which hath not excited, in some people or other, a remembrance, an admiration, a symbol, of his power. The evil of idolatry is this: Rival nations have raised up rival deities; war hath been denounced in the name of Heaven; men have been murdered for the love of God; and such impiety hath darkened all the regions of the world, that the Lord of all things hath been invoked by all simultaneously as the Lord of hosts. This is the only invocation in which men of every creed are united,—an invocation to which Satan, bent on the perdition of the human race, might have listened from the fallen angels.

Calvin. We cannot hope to purify men's hearts until we lead them away from the abomination of Babylon; nor will they be led away from it until we reduce the images to dust. So long as they stand, the eye will hanker after them, and the spirit be corrupt.

Melancthon. And long afterward, I sadly fear.

We attribute to the weakest of men the appellations and powers of Deity; we fall down before them; we call the impious and cruel by the title of *gracious* and *most religious:* and, even in the house of God himself, and before his very altar, we split his Divine Majesty asunder, and offer the largest part to the most corrupt and most corrupting of his creatures.

Calvin. Not *we*, M. Melancthon. I will preach, I will exist, in no land of such abomination.

Melancthon. So far, well; but religion demands more. Our reformers knock off the head from Jupiter: thunderbolt and sceptre stand. The attractive, the impressive, the august, they would annihilate; leaving men nothing but their sordid fears of vindictive punishment, and their impious doubts of our Saviour's promises.

Calvin. We should teach men to retain for ever the fear of God before their eyes, never to cease from the apprehension of his wrath, to be well aware that he often afflicts when he is farthest from wrath, and that such infliction is a benefit bestowed by him.

Melancthon. What! if only a few are to be saved when the infliction is over?

Calvin. It becometh not us to repine at the number of vessels which the supremely wise Artificer forms, breaks, and casts away, or at the paucity it pleaseth him to preserve. The ways of Providence are inscrutable.

Melancthon. Some of them are, and some of them are not; and in these it seems to be his design that we should see and adore his wisdom. We fancy that all our inflictions are sent us directly and immediately from above: sometimes we think it in piety and contrition, but oftener in moroseness and discontent. It would, however, be well if we attempted to trace the causes of them. We should probably find their origin in some region of the heart which we never had well explored, or in which we had secretly deposited our worst indulgences. The clouds that intercept the heavens from us come not from the heavens, but from the earth.

Why should we scribble our own devices over the Book of God, erasing the plainest words, and rendering the Holy Scriptures a worthless palimpsest? Cannot we agree to show the nations of the world that the whole of Christianity is practicable, although the better parts never have been practised, no—not even by the priesthood—in any single one of them? Bishops, confessors, saints, martyrs, have never denounced to king or people, nor ever have attempted to delay or mitigate, the most accursed of crimes, the crime of Cain,—the crime indeed whereof Cain's was only a germ,—the crime of fratricide; war, war, devastating, depopulating, soul-slaughtering, heaven-defying war. Alas! the gentle call of mercy sounds feebly, and soon dies away, leaving no trace on the memory: but the swelling cries of vengeance, in which we believe we imitate the voice of Heaven, run and reverberate in loud peals and multiplied echoes along the whole vault of the brain. All the man is shaken by them; and he shakes all the earth.

Calvin! I beseech you, do you who guide and govern so many, do you (whatever others may) spare your brethren. Doubtful as I am of lighter texts, blown backward and forward at the opening of opposite windows, I am convinced and certain of one grand immovable verity. It sounds strange; it sounds contradictory.

Calvin. I am curious to hear it.

Melancthon. You shall. This is the tenet: There is nothing on earth divine beside humanity.

XXIII. GALILEO, MILTON, AND A DOMINICAN.[1]

Milton. Friend! let me pass.

Dominican. Whither? To whom?

Milton. Into the prison; to Galileo Galilei.

Dominican. Prison! We have no prison.

Milton. No prison here! What sayest thou?

Dominican. Son! For heretical pravity indeed, and some other less atrocious crimes, we have a seclusion, a confinement, a penitentiary: we have a locality for softening the obdurate, and furnishing them copiously with reflection and recollection; but prison we have none.

Milton. Open!

Dominican (*to himself*). What sweetness! what authority! what a form! what an attitude! what a voice!

Milton. Open! Delay me no longer.

Dominican. In whose name?

Milton. In the name of humanity and of God.

Dominican. My sight staggers; the walls shake; he must be —do angels ever come hither?

Milton. Be reverent, and stand apart. [*To Galileo.*] Pardon me, sir, an intrusion.

[1 At the date of Milton's journey into Italy, Galileo had been for some time free from actual imprisonment. He was living at Arcetri, near Florence. His blindness was just become complete. (Works, ii., 1846. Works, v., 1876.)]

Galileo. Young man! if I may judge by your voice and manner, you are little apt to ask pardon or to want it. I am as happy at hearing you as you seem unhappy at seeing me. I perceive at once that you are an Englishman.

Milton. I am.

Galileo. Speak, then, freely; and I will speak freely, too. In no other man's presence, for these many years,—indeed, from my very childhood,—have I done it.

Milton. Sad fate for any man! most sad for one like you!—the follower of truth, the companion of reason in her wanderings on earth!

Galileo. We live among priests and princes and empoisoners. Your dog, by his growling, seems to be taking up the quarrel against them.

Milton. We think and feel alike in many things. I have observed that the horses and dogs of every country bear a resemblance in character to the men. We English have a wonderful variety of both creatures. To begin with the horses: some are remarkable for strength, others for spirit; while in France there is little diversity of race,—all are noisy and windy, skittish and mordacious, prancing and libidinous, fit only for a rope, and fond only of a ribbon. Where the ribbon is not to be had, the jowl of a badger will do: any thing but what is native to the creature is a decoration. In Flanders, you find them slow and safe, tractable and substantial. In Italy, there are few good for work, none for battle; many for light carriages, for standing at doors, and for every kind of street-work.

Galileo. Do let us get among the dogs.

Milton. In France, they are finely combed and pert and pettish; ready to bite if hurt, and to fondle if carressed; without fear, without animosity, without affection. In Italy, they creep and shiver and rub their skins against you, and insinuate their slender beaks into the patronage of your hand, and lick it, and look up modestly, and whine decorously, and supplicate with grace. The moment you give them anything, they grow importunate; and, the moment you refuse them, they bite. In Spain and England, the races are similar; so, indeed, are those of the men. Spaniards are Englishmen in an ungrafted state,—however, with this great difference, that the English have ever been the

least cruel of nations, excepting the Swedes; and the Spaniards the most cruel, excepting the French. Then they were, under one and the same religion, the most sanguinary and sordid of all the institutions that ever pressed upon mankind.

Galileo. To the dogs, to the dogs again, be they of what breed they may!

Milton. The worst of them could never have driven you up into this corner, merely because he had been dreaming, and you had disturbed his dream. How long shall this endure?

Galileo. I sometimes ask God how long. I should repine, and almost despair, in putting the question to myself or another.

Milton. Be strong in him through reason, his great gift.

Galileo. I fail not, and shall not fail. I can fancy that the heaviest link in my heavy chain has dropped off me since you entered.

Milton. Let me, then, praise our God for it! Not those alone are criminal who placed you here, but those no less who left unto them the power of doing it. If the learned and intelligent in all the regions of Europe would unite their learning and intellect, and would exert their energy in disseminating the truth throughout the countries they inhabit, soon must the ignorant and oppressive, now at the summit of power, resign their offices; and the most versatile nations, after this purifying and perfect revolution, rest for ages. But, bursting from their collegiate kennels, they range and hunt only for their masters; and are content at last to rear up and catch the offal thrown among them negligently, and often too with scourges on their cringing spines, as they scramble for it. Do they run through mire and thorns, do they sweat from their tongues' ends, do they breathe out blood, for this? The Dominican is looking in; not to interrupt us, I hope, for my idle exclamation.

Galileo. Continue to speak generously, rationally, and in Latin; and he will not understand one sentence. The fellow is the most stupid, the most superstitious, the most hard-hearted, and the most libidinous in the confraternity. He is usually at my door, that he may not be at others', where he would be more in the way of his superiors. You Englishmen are inclined to melancholy; but what makes you so very grave, so much graver than before?

Milton. I hardly know which is more afflicting,—to hear the loudest expression of intolerable anguish from the weak who are sinking under it, or to witness an aged and venerable man bearing up against his sufferings with unshaken constancy. And, alas, that blindness should consummate your sufferings!

Galileo. There are worse evils than blindness, and the best men suffer most by them. The spirit of liberty, now rising up in your country, will excite a blind enthusiasm, and leave behind a bitter disappointment. Vicious men will grow popular, and the interests of the nation will be entrusted to them; because they descend from their station in order, as they say, to serve you.

Milton. Profligate impostors? We know there are such among us; but truth shall prevail against them.

Galileo. In argument, truth always prevails finally; in politics, falsehood always: else would never States fall into decay. Even good men, if indeed good men will ever mix with evil ones for any purpose, take up the trade of politics, at first intending to deal honestly; the calm bower of the conscience is soon converted into the booth of inebriating popularity; the shouts of the multitude then grow unexciting, then indifferent, then troublesome; lastly, the riotous supporters of the condescendent falling half-asleep, he looks agape in their faces, springs upon his legs again, flings the door behind him, and escapes in the livery of Power. When Satan would have led our Saviour into temptation, he did not conduct him where the looser passions were wandering; he did not conduct him amid flowers and herbage, where a fall would have only been a soilure to our frail human nature: no, he led him up to an exceedingly high mountain, and showed him palaces and towers and treasuries, knowing that it was by those alone that he himself could have been so utterly lost to rectitude and beatitude. Our Saviour spurned the temptation, and the greatest of his miracles was accomplished. After which, even the father of lies never ventured to dispute his divine nature.

Dominican. I must not suffer you to argue on theology; you may pervert the young man.

Milton. In addition to confinement, must this fungus of vapid folly stain your cell? If so, let me hope you have re-

ceived the assurance that the term of your imprisonment will be short.

Galileo. It may be, or not, as God wills: it is for life.

Milton. For life!

Galileo. Even so. I regret that I cannot go forth; and my depression is far below regret when I think that, if ever I should be able to make a discovery, the world is never to derive the benefit. I love the fields, and the country air, and the sunny sky, and the starry; and I could keep my temper when, in the midst of my calculations, the girls brought me flowers from lonely places, and asked me their names, and puzzled me. But now I fear lest a compulsory solitude should have rendered me a little moroser. And yet methinks I could bear again a stalk to be thrown in my face, as a deceiver, for calling the blossom that had been on it Andromeda; and could pardon as easily as ever a slap on the shoulder for my Ursa Major. Pleasant Arcetri!

Milton. I often walk along its quiet lanes, somewhat too full of the white eglantine in the narrower parts of them. They are so long and pliant, a little wind is enough to blow them in the face; and they scratch as much as their betters.

Galileo. Pleasant Arcetri!

Milton. The sigh that rises at the thought of a friend may be almost as genial as his voice. 'Tis a breath that seems rather to come from him than from ourselves.

Galileo. I sighed not at any thought of friendship. How do I know that any friend is left me? I was thinking that, in those unfrequented lanes, the birds that were frightened could fly away. Pleasant Arcetri! Well: we (I mean those who are not blind) can see the stars from all places; we may know that there are other worlds, and we may hope that there are happier. So, then, you often walk to that village?

Milton. Oftener to Fiesole.

Galileo. You like Fiesole better?

Milton. Must I confess it? For a walk, I do.

Galileo. So did I,—so did I. What friends we are already! I made some observations from Fiesole.

Milton. I shall remember it on my return, and shall revisit the scenery with fresh delight. Alas! is this a promise I can keep, when I must think of you here?

Galileo. My good, compassionate young man! I am concerned that my apartment allows you so little space to walk about.

Milton. Could ever I have been guilty of such disrespect! O sir, far remote, far beyond all others, is that sentiment from my heart! It swelled, and put every sinew of every limb into motion, at your indignity. No, no! Suffer me still to bend in reverence and humility on this hand, now stricken with years and with captivity!—on this hand, which science has followed, which God himself has guided, and before which all the worlds above us, in all their magnitudes and distances, have been thrown open.

Galileo. Ah, my too friendly enthusiast! may yours do more, and with impunity.

Milton. At least, be it instrumental in removing from the earth a few of her heaviest curses; a few of her oldest and worst impediments to liberty and wisdom,—mitres, tiaras, crowns, and the trumpery whereon they rest. I know but two genera of men,—the annual and the perennial. Those who die down, and leave behind them no indication of the places whereon they grow, are cognate with the gross matter about them; those on the contrary, who, ages after their departure, are able to sustain the lowliest, and to exalt the highest,—those are surely the spirits of God, both when upon earth and when with him. What do I see, in letting fall the sleeve? The scars and lacerations on your arms show me that you have fought for your country.

Galileo. I cannot claim that honor. Do not look at them. My guardian may understand that.

Milton. Great God! they are the marks of the torture!

Galileo. My guardian may understand that likewise. Let us converse about something else.

Milton. Italy! Italy! Italy! drive thy poets into exile, into prison, into madness!—spare, spare thy one philosopher! What track can the mind pursue, in her elevations or her plains or her recesses, without the dogging and prowling of the priesthood?

Galileo. They have not done with me yet. A few days ago they informed me that I was accused or suspected of disbelieving the existence of devils. When I protested that in my opinion there are almost as many devils as there are men, and that every wise man is the creator of hundreds at his first appearance,

they told me with much austerity and scornfulness of rebuke, that this opinion is as heretical as the other; and that we have no authority from Scripture for believing that the complement exceeded some few legions, several of which were thinned and broken by beating up their quarters,—thanks chiefly to the Dominicans. I bowed, as became me; for these are worthy masters, and their superiors, the successors of Peter, would burn us for teaching any thing untaught before.

Milton. They would burn you, then, for resembling the great apostle himself?

Galileo. In what but denying the truth and wearing chains?

Milton. Educated with such examples before them, literary societies are scarcely more tolerant to the luminaries of imagination than theological societies are to the luminaries of science. I myself, indeed, should hesitate to place Tasso on an equality, or nearly on an equality, with Ariosto; yet, since his pen hath been excelled on the Continent by only two in sixteen centuries, he might have expected more favor, more forbearance, than he found. I was shocked at the impudence of his critics in this country: their ignorance less surprised me.*

Galileo. Of yours I am unable to speak.

Milton. So much the better.

Galileo. Instead of it, you will allow me to express my admiration of what (if I understand any thing) I understand. No nation has produced any man, except Aristoteles, comparable to either of the Bacons. The elder was the more wonderful; the later in season was the riper and the greater. Neither of them told all he knew, or half he thought; and each was alike prodigal in giving, and prudent in withholding. The learning and genius

* Criticism is still very low in Italy. Tiraboschi has done little for it: nothing can be less exact than his judgments on the poets. There is not one remarkable sentence, or one happy expression, in all his volumes. The same may be said of Abbate Cesarotti, and of the Signor Calsabigi, who wrote on Alfieri. There is scarcely a glimpse of poetry in Alfieri; yet his verses are tight-braced, and his strokes are animating,—not, indeed, to the Signor Calsabigi. The Italians are grown more generous to their literary men in proportion as they are grown poorer in them. Italy is the only great division of Europe where there never hath existed a Review bearing some authority or credit. These things do not greatly serve literature; but they rise from it, and show it.

of Francis led him onward to many things which his nobility and stateliness disallowed. Hence was he like the leisurely and rich agriculturist, who goeth out a-field after dinner, well knowing where lie the nests and covies; and in such idle hour throweth his hat partly over them, and they clutter and run and rise and escape from him without his heed, to make a louder whirr thereafter, and a longer flight elsewhere.

Milton. I believe I have discovered no few inaccuracies in his reasoning, voluntary or involuntary. But I apprehend he committed them designedly, and that he wanted in wisdom but the highest,—the wisdom of honesty. It is comfortable to escape from him, and return again to Sorrento and Tasso. He should have been hailed as the worthy successor, not scrutinized as the presumptuous rival, of the happy Ferrarese. He was ingenious, he was gentle, he was brave; and what was the reward? Did cities contend for his residence within them? Did princes throw open their palaces at his approach? Did academies send deputations to invite and solicit his attendance? Did senators cast branches of laurel under his horse's hoofs? Did prelates and princes hang tapestries from their windows, meet him at the gates, and conduct him in triumph to the Capitol? Instead of it, his genius was derided, his friendship scorned, his love rejected; he lived despairingly, he died broken-hearted.

Galileo. My friend! my friend! you yourself in your language are almost a poet.

Milton. I may be, in time to come.

Galileo. What! with such an example before your eyes? Rather be a philosopher: you may be derided in this too; but you will not be broken-hearted. I am ashamed when I reflect that the worst enemies of Torquato, pushing him rudely against Ariosto, are to be found in Florence.

Milton. Be the difference what it may between them, your academicians ought to be aware that the lowest of the animals are nearer to the highest of them, than these highest are to the lowest of those two. For in what greatly more do they benefit the world than the animals do, or how much longer remain in the memory of their species?

Galileo. Little, very little; and the same thing may be easily proved of those whom they praise and venerate. My knowledge

of poetry is narrow; and, having little enthusiasm, I discover faults where beauties escape me. I never would venture to say before our Italians what I will confess to you. In reading the *Gerusalemme Liberata*, I remarked that among the epithets the poet is fondest of *grande:* I had remarked that Virgil is fondest of *altus*. Now, we cannot make any thing greater or higher by clapping these words upon it: where the substructure is not sufficiently broad and solid, they will not stick. The first verses in the *Gerusalemme*, for instance, are—

> Canto le arme pietose e 'l capitano
> Che il *gran* sepolcro liberò di Cristo.

Surely, the poet would rather have had a great captain than a great cenotaph.

Milton. He might have written, with a modester and less sonorous exordium,—

> Canto le arme pietose e 'l capitano,
> *Lui che il* sepolcro liberò di Cristo.

Galileo. It would not have done for our people, either the unlearned or learned. They must have *high*, *gigantic*, *immense;* they must have ebony, gold, azure; they must have honey, sugar, cinnamon, as regularly in their places as blue-lettered jars, full or empty, are found in apothecaries' shops. Dante and Ariosto, different as they are, equally avoided these sweet viscidities. I wish you would help me to exonerate Tasso from the puffy piece of impediment at the beginning of his march.

Milton. Let us imagine that he considered all Jerusalem as the sepulchre of Christ.

Galileo. No friend or countryman hath said it for him. We will accept it, and go on. Our best histories, excepting Giovio's and Davila's, contain no picture, no character, no passion, no eloquence; and Giovio's is partial and faithless. Criticism is more verbose and less logical here than among the French, the Germans, and the Dutch.

Milton. Let us return to Ariosto and Tasso, who, whatever the academicians may gabble in their assemblies, have delighted the most cultivated minds, and will delight them for incalculable ages.

Galileo. An academician, a dunghill-cock, and a worm do indeed form a triangle more nearly equilateral than an academician, a Lodovico, and a Torquato. The Dominican is listening yet. Behold, he comes in!

Dominican. Young gentleman, I did not suspect, when you entered, that you would ever talk about authors whose writings are prohibited. Ariosto is obscene. I have heard the same of Tasso, in some part or other.

Milton. Prythee, begone!

Dominican. We retire together.

Galileo. It would be better to leave me, if he urges it; otherwise I may never expect again the pleasure I have received to-day.

Dominican. Signor Galileo, do you talk of pleasure to young persons? Most illustrious signorino, the orders of my superior are to reconduct you.

Milton. Adieu, then, O too great man!

Galileo. For to-day, adieu!

Dominican (*out of the door*). In my lowly cell, O signorino (if your excellency in her inborn gentleness could condescend to favor her humblest slave with her most desired presence), are prepared some light refreshments.

Milton. Swallow them, swallow them; thou seemest thirsty: I enter but one cell here.

Dominican (*aside, having bowed respectfully*). Devil! heretic! never shalt thou more!

XXIV. ESSEX AND SPENSER.[1]

Essex. Instantly on hearing of thy arrival from Ireland, I sent a message to thee, good Edmund, that I might learn, from one so judicious and dispassionate as thou art, the real state of

[1 Spenser had served in Ireland as the Secretary to Lord Grey, the Deputy, and had been rewarded by a large grant of the Desmond property. Upon the rebellion of the Earl of Desmond, an attack was made upon his house, so suddenly, that, though Spenser himself escaped,

things in that distracted country; it having pleased the Queen's Majesty to think of appointing me her deputy, in order to bring the rebellious to submission.

Spenser. Wisely and well considered; but more worthily of her judgment than her affection. May your lordship overcome, as you have ever done, the difficulties and dangers you foresee.

Essex. We grow weak by striking at random; and knowing that I must strike, and strike heavily, I would fain see exactly where the stroke shall fall.

Some attribute to the Irish all sorts of excesses; others tell us that these are old stories; that there is not a more inoffensive race of merry creatures under heaven, and that their crimes are all hatched for them here in England, by the incubation of printers' boys, and are brought to market at times of distressing dearth in news. From all that I myself have seen of them, I can only say that the civilized (I mean the richer and titled) are as susceptible of heat as iron, and as impenetrable to light as granite. The half-barbarous are probably worse; the utterly barbarous may be somewhat better. Like game-cocks, they must spur when they meet. One fights because he fights an Englishman; another, because the fellow he quarrels with comes from a distant county; a third, because the next parish is an eyesore to him, and his fist-mate is from it. The only thing in which they all agree as proper law is the tooth-for-tooth act. Luckily, we have a bishop who is a native, and we call him before the Queen. He represented to Her Majesty that every thing in Old Ireland tended to re-produce its kind,—crimes among others; and he declared frankly that if an honest man is murdered, or, what is dearer to an honest man, if his honor is wounded in the person of his wife, it must be expected that he will retaliate. Her Majesty delivered it as her opinion, that the latter case of vindictiveness

one of his children was left behind and perished in the fire. He himself returned to England to die soon after, and to the Earl of Essex he owed his tomb.

(First printed (1834) with "The Citation of William Shakespeare." Works, ii. 1846; Works, v. 1876. In the first edition there are certain prefaces and appendices to this Conversation, which are only intelligible when read with "The Citation;" they are not reprinted here.)]

was more likely to take effect than the former. But the bishop replied, that in his conscience he could not answer for either if the man was up. The dean of the same diocese gave us a more favorable report. Being a justice of the peace, he averred most solemnly that no man ever had complained to him of murder, excepting one who had lost so many fore-teeth by a cudgel that his deposition could not be taken exactly; added to which, his head was a little clouded with drunkenness; furthermore, that extremely few women had adduced sufficiently clear proofs of violence, excepting those who were wilful, and resisted with tooth and nail. In all which cases, it was difficult—nay, impossible—to ascertain which violence began first and lasted longest.

There is not a nation upon earth that pretends to be so superlatively generous and high-minded; and there is not one (I speak from experience) so utterly base and venal. I have positive proof that the nobility, in a mass, are agreed to sell, for a stipulated sum, all their rights and privileges, so much per man; and the Queen is inclined thereunto. But would our Parliament consent to pay money for a cargo of rotten pilchards? And would not our captains be readier to swamp than to import them? The noisiest rogues in that kingdom, if not quieted by a halter, may be quieted by making them brief-collectors, and by allowing them, first, to encourage the incendiary; then, to denounce and hang him; and, lastly, to collect all the money they can, running up and down with the whining ferocity of half-starved hyenas, under pretence of repairing the damages their exhausted country hath sustained. Others ask, modestly, a few thousands a year, and no more, from those whom they represent to us as naked and famished; and prove clearly, to every dispassionate man who hath a single drop of free blood in his veins, that at least this pittance is due to them for abandoning their liberal and lucrative professions, and for endangering their valuable lives on the tempestuous seas, in order that the voice of truth may sound for once upon the shores of England, and humanity cast her shadow on the council-chamber.

I gave a dinner to a party of these fellows a few weeks ago. I know not how many kings and princes were among them, nor how many poets and prophets and legislators and sages. When they were half-drunk, they coaxed and threatened; when they

had gone somewhat deeper, they joked, and croaked and hiccoughed, and wept over sweet Ireland; and, when they could neither stand nor sit any longer, they fell upon their knees and their noddles, and swore that limbs, life, liberty, Ireland, and God himself, were all at the Queen's service. It was only their holy religion, the religion of their forefathers,—here sobs interrupted some, howls others, execrations more, and the liquor they had ingulfed the rest. I looked down on them with stupor and astonishment, seeing faces, forms, dresses, much like ours, and recollecting their ignorance, levity, and ferocity. My pages drew them gently by the heels down the steps; my grooms set them upright (inasmuch as might be) on their horses; and the people in the streets, shouting and pelting, sent forward the beasts to their straw.

Various plans have been laid before us for civilizing or coercing them. Among the pacific, it was proposed to make an offer to five hundred of the richer Jews in the Hanse-towns and in Poland, who should be raised to the dignity of the Irish peerage, and endowed with four thousand acres of good forfeited land, on condition of each paying two thousand pounds, and of keeping up ten horsemen and twenty foot, Germans or Poles, in readiness for service.

The Catholics bear nowhere such ill-will toward Jews as toward Protestants. Brooks make even worse neighbors than oceans do.

I myself saw no objection to the measure; but our gracious Queen declared she had an insuperable one,—*they stank!* We all acknowledged the strength of the argument, and took out our handkerchiefs. Lord Burleigh almost fainted; and Raleigh wondered how the Emperor Titus could bring up his men against Jerusalem.

"Ah!" said he, looking reverentially at Her Majesty, "the star of Berenice shone above him! And what evil influence could that star not quell! what malignancy could it not annihilate!"

Hereupon he touched the earth with his brow, until the Queen said,—

"Sir Walter! lift me up those laurels."

At which manifestation of princely good-will he was ad-

vancing to kiss Her Majesty's hand; but she waved it, and said sharply,—

"Stand there, dog!"

Now what tale have you for us?

Spenser. Interrogate me, my lord, that I may answer each question distinctly, my mind being in sad confusion at what I have seen and undergone.

Essex. Give me thy account and opinion of these very affairs as thou leftest them; for I would rather know one part well than all imperfectly; and the violences of which I have heard within the day surpass belief.

Why weepest thou, my gentle Spenser? Have the rebels sacked thy house?

Spenser. They have plundered and utterly destroyed it.

Essex. I grieve for thee, and will see thee righted.

Spenser. In this they have little harmed me.

Essex. How! I have heard it reported that thy grounds are fertile, and thy mansion * large and pleasant.

Spenser. If river and lake and meadow-ground and mountain could render any place the abode of pleasantness, pleasant was mine, indeed!

On the lovely banks of Mulla I found deep contentment. Under the dark alders did I muse and meditate. Innocent hopes were my gravest cares, and my playfullest fancy was with kindly wishes. Ah! surely of all cruelties the worst is to extinguish our kindness. Mine is gone: I love the people and the land no longer. My lord, ask me not about them: I may speak injuriously.

Essex. Think rather, then, of thy happier hours and busier occupations; these likewise may instruct me.

Spenser. The first seeds I sowed in the garden, ere the old castle was made habitable for my lovely bride, were acorns from Penshurst. I planted a little oak before my mansion at the birth of each child. My sons, I said to myself, shall often play in the shade of them when I am gone; and every year shall they take the measure of their growth, as fondly as I take theirs.

Essex. Well, well; but let not this thought make thee weep so bitterly.

* It was purchased by a victualler and banker, the father or grandfather of Lord Riversdale.

Spenser. Poison may ooze from beautiful plants; deadly grief from dearest reminiscences.

I *must* grieve, I *must* weep: it seems the law of God, and the only one that men are not disposed to contravene. In the performance of this alone do they effectually aid one another.

Essex. Spenser! I wish I had at hand any arguments or persuasions, of force sufficient to remove thy sorrow; but, really, I am not in the habit of seeing men grieve at any thing except the loss of favor at court, or of a hawk, or of a buck-hound. And were I to swear out my condolences to a man of thy discernment, in the same round roll-call phrases we employ with one another upon these occasions, I should be guilty, not of insincerity, but of insolence. True grief hath ever something sacred in it; and, when it visiteth a wise man and a brave one, is most holy.

Nay, kiss not my hand: he whom God smiteth hath God with him. In his presence what am I?

Spenser. Never so great, my lord, as at this hour, when you see aright who is greater. May he guide your counsels, and preserve your life and glory!

Essex. Where are thy friends? Are they with thee?

Spenser. Ah, where, indeed! Generous, true-hearted Philip! where art thou, whose presence was unto me peace and safety; whose smile was contentment, and whose praise renown? My lord! I cannot but think of him among still heavier losses: he was my earliest friend, and would have taught me wisdom.

Essex. Pastoral poetry, my dear Spenser, doth not require tears and lamentations. Dry thine eyes; rebuild thine house: the Queen and Council, I venture to promise thee, will make ample amends for every evil thou hast sustained. What! does that enforce thee to wail yet louder?

Spenser. Pardon me, bear with me, most noble heart! I have lost what no Council, no Queen, no Essex, can restore.

Essex. We will see that. There are other swords, and other arms to wield them, beside a Leicester's and a Raleigh's. Others can crush their enemies, and serve their friends.

Spenser. O my sweet child! And of many so powerful, many so wise and so beneficent, was there none to save thee? None! none!

Essex. I now perceive that thou lamentest what almost every father is destined to lament. Happiness must be bought, although the payment may be delayed. Consider; the same calamity might have befallen thee here in London. Neither the houses of ambassadors, nor the palaces of kings, nor the altars of God himself, are asylums against death. How do I know but under this very roof there may sleep some latent calamity, that in an instant shall cover with gloom every inmate of the house, and every far dependent?

Spenser. God avert it!

Essex. Every day, every hour of the year, do hundreds mourn what thou mournest.

Spenser. Oh, no, no, no! Calamities there are around us; calamities there are all over the earth; calamities there are in all seasons: but none in any season, none in any place, like mine.

Essex. So say all fathers, so say all husbands. Look at any old mansion-house, and let the sun shine as gloriously as it may on the golden vanes, or the arms recently quartered over the gateway or the embayed window, and on the happy pair that haply is toying at it: nevertheless, thou mayest say that of a certainty the same fabric hath seen much sorrow within its chambers, and heard many wailings; and each time this was the heaviest stroke of all. Funerals have passed along through the stout-hearted knights upon the wainscot, and amid the laughing nymphs upon the arras. Old servants have shaken their heads as if somebody had deceived them, when they found that beauty and nobility could perish.

Edmund! the things that are too true pass by us as if they were not true at all; and when they have singled us out, then only do they strike us. Thou and I must go too. Perhaps the next year may blow us away with its fallen leaves.*

Spenser. For you, my lord, many years (I trust) are waiting: I never shall see those fallen leaves. No leaf, no bud, will spring upon the earth before I sink into her breast for ever.

Essex. Thou, who art wiser than most men, shouldst bear with patience, equanimity, and courage what is common to all.

Spenser. Enough, enough, enough! have all men seen their infant burned to ashes before their eyes?

Essex. Gracious God! Merciful Father! what is this?

* It happened so.

Spenser. Burned alive! burned to ashes! burned to ashes! The flames dart their serpent tongues through the nursery-window. I cannot quit thee, my Elizabeth! I cannot lay down our Edmund! Oh, these flames! They persecute, they enthrall me; they curl round my temples; they hiss upon my brain; they taunt me with their fierce, foul voices; they carp at me, they wither me, they consume me, throwing back to me a little of life to roll and suffer in, with their fangs upon me. Ask me, my lord, the things you wish to know from me: I may answer them; I am now composed again. Command me, my gracious lord! I would yet serve you: soon I shall be unable. You have stooped to raise me up; you have borne with me; you have pitied me, even like one not powerful. You have brought comfort, and will leave it with me; for gratitude is comfort.

Oh! my memory stands all a tip-toe on one burning point: when it drops from it, then it perishes. Spare me: ask me nothing; let me weep before you in peace,—the kindest act of greatness.

Essex. I should rather have dared to mount into the midst of the conflagration than I now dare entreat thee not to weep. The tears that overflow thy heart, my Spenser, will staunch and heal it in their sacred stream; but not without hope in God.

Spenser. My hope in God is that I may soon see again what he has taken from me. Amid the myriads of angels, there is not one so beautiful; and even he (if there be any) who is appointed my guardian could never love me so. Ah! these are idle thoughts, vain wanderings, distempered dreams. If there ever were guardian angels, he who so wanted one —my helpless boy—would not have left these arms upon my knees.

Essex. God help and sustain thee, too gentle Spenser! I never will desert thee. But what am I? Great they have called me! Alas, how powerless then and infantile is greatness in the presence of calamity!

Come, give me thy hand: let us walk up and down the gallery. Bravely done! I will envy no more a Sidney or a Raleigh.

XXV. ARCHDEACON HARE AND WALTER LANDOR.[1]

Archdeacon Hare. In some of your later writings, I perceive, you have not strictly followed the line you formerly laid down for spelling.

Walter Landor. I found it inexpedient; since, whatever the pains I took, there was, in every sheet almost, some deviation on the side of the compositor. Inconsistency was forced on me against all my struggles and reclamations. At last, nothing is left for me but to enter my protest, and to take the smooth path instead of the broken-up highway.

Archdeacon Hare. It is chiefly in the preterites and participles that I have followed you perseveringly. We are rich in having two for many of our verbs, and unwise in corrupting the spelling, and thereby rendering the pronunciation difficult. We pronounce "astonisht;" we write "astonished" or "astonish'd,"—an unnecessary harshness. Never was spoken dropp*ed* or lopp*ed* or hopp*ed* or propp*ed*, but dropt, &c.; yet, with the choice before us, we invariably take the wrong. I do not resign a right to "astonish*ed*" or "diminish*ed*." They may, with many like them, be useful in poetry; and several such terminations add dignity and solemnity to what we read

[1 The first part of this Conversation is concerned with words and letters. But the latter and larger part is extremely interesting. It is in part an answer to De Quincey's rather spiteful "Notes on Walter Savage Landor" (Works, viii., ed. 1852), and in part an answer to a reviewer who had quoted from that book. Landor does not seem to have read De Quincey's attack. Had he done so, he must have noticed the parallel drawn between himself and Plato. "Both are unread," says De Quincey, "both inclined to be voluptuous; both had a hankering after purple and fine linen . . . and both bestowed pains as elaborate upon the secret *art* of a dialogue, as a lapidary would upon the cutting of a Sultan's rubies." Had Landor read this, his retort would have been rougher, though not less contemptuous. Archdeacon Hare is so well known, that nothing need be said of him here, except that he was a faithful friend to Landor, believed in him, saw the first editions of the Conversations through the press, and printed some in the *Philological Museum*, a magazine edited by him at Cambridge. ("Last Fruit," 1853; Works, v., 1876.)]

in our church,—the sanctuary at once of our faith and of our language.

Walter Landor. In more essential things than preterites and participles, I ought rather to have been your follower than you mine. No language is purer or clearer than yours. Vigorous streams from the mountain do not mingle at once with the turbid lake, but retain their force and their color in the midst of it. We are sapped by an influx of putridity.

Archdeacon Hare. Come, come; again to our spelling-book.

Walter Landor. Well then, we differ on the spelling of *honour*, *favour*, &c. You would retain the *u*: I would eject it, for the sake of consistency. We have dropped it in *author*, *emperor*, *ambassador*. Here again, for consistency and compliancy, I write "embassador;" because I write, as all do, "embassy." I write theat*er*, sepulch*er*, met*er*, in their English form rather than the French. The best authors have done it. All write "hexamet*er*" and "pentamet*er*."

Archdeacon Hare. It is well to simplify and systematize wherever we can do it conveniently.

Walter Landor. And without violence to *vested rights*; which words have here some meaning. Why "*a*mend," if "*e*mendation"? Why not "pont*if*," if "cait*if*"?

Archdeacon Hare. Why, then, should grand*eur* be left in solitary state? The Englishman less easily protrudes his nether jaw than the Frenchman, as "grand*eur*" seems to require. Grand*our* (or grand*or*, if you will have it so) sounds better.

Walter Landor. I *will* have it so; and so will you and others at last.

Archdeacon Hare. Meanwhile, let us untie this last knot of Norman bondage on the common law of language in our land.

Walter Landor. Set about it: no authority is higher than yours. I will run by the side of you, or be your herald, or (what better becomes me) your pursuivant.

There is an affectation of scholarship in compilers of spelling-books, and in the authors they follow for examples, when they bring forward *phenomena* and the like. They might as well bring forward *mysteria*. We have no right to tear Greek and Latin declensions out of their grammars: we need no *vortices* when we have *vortexes* before us; and while we have *memorandums*, *fac-*

totums, *ultimatums*, let our shepherd-dogs bring back to us by the ear such as have wandered from the flock.

Archeacon Hare. We have "stimul*ant;*" why "stimul*us*"? why "stimul*i*"? Why "recip*e*"? why "rece*ipt*"?—we might as reasonably write "dece*ipt*" and "conce*ipt*." I believe we are the only people who keep the *Dramatis Personæ* on the stage, or announce their going off by "*exeunt:*" "*exit*" for *departure* is endurable, and kept in countenance by *transit*. Let us deprecate the danger of hearing of a friend's *obit*, which seems imminent: a "*post-obit*" is bad enough. An *item* I would confine to the ledger. I have no mind for *animus*.

Walter Landor. Besides these, there are two expressions either of which is quite enough to bring down curses and mortality on the poet. "*Stand confest*" (even if not written "confess'*d*") is one; "*unbidden tears*," the other. I can imagine no such nonsense as *unbidden tears*. Why do we not write the verb *control* with an *e* at the end, and the substantive with *u*, as *soul?* We might as reasonably write *whol* for *whole*. Very unreasonably do we write *wholly* with a double *l*; *wholy* and *soly* might follow the type of *holy*. We see printed *befal* with one *l*, but never *fal;* and yet in the monosyllable we should not be doubtful of the accentuation. It is but of late that we contro*l*, reca*l*, appa*l:* we do not yet ro*l*. Will any one tell me who put such a lazy beast to our *munition*-train, and spelled on the front of the carriage *am*munition? We write *enter* and *inter* equally with a single final *r:* surely the latter wants another.

Archdeacon Hare. What is quite as censurable, while we reject the good of our own countrymen, we adopt the bad of the foreigner. We are much in the habit of using the word *flibustier*. Surely, we might let the French take and torture our *freebooter*. In our fondness for making verbs out of substantives, we even go to the excess of *flibustering*. And now from coarse vulgarity let us turn our eyes towards inconsiderate refinement. When I was a boy, every girl among the poets was a *nymph*, whether in country or town. Johnson countenanced them, and, arm-in-arm with Pope, followed them even into Jerusalem: "Ye nymphs of Solyma," &c.

Walter Landor. Pity they ever found their way back!

Archdeacon Hare. Few even now object to *muse* and *bard*.

Walter Landor. Nor would I, in their proper places: the muse in Greece and Italy; the bard, on our side of the Alps, up almost as far as Scandinavia, quite as far as the Cimbrian Chersonese. But the bard looks better at nine or ten centuries off than among gentlemen in roquelaures or paletots. Johnson, a great reprehender, might fairly and justly have reprehended him in the streets of London, whatever were his own excesses among the "nymphs of Solyma." In the midst of his gravity, he was not quite impartial, and, extraordinary as were his intellectual powers, he knew about as much of poetry as of geography. In one of his letters he talks of Guadaloupe as being in another hemisphere. Speaking of that island, his very words are these: "Whether you return hither, or stay in another hemisphere." At the commencement of his Satire on the *Vanity of Human Wishes* (a noble specimen of declamation), he places China nearer to us than Peru.

Archdeacon Hare. The negligences of Johnson may easily be forgiven, in consideration of the many benefits he has conferred on literature. A small poet, no great critic, he was a strenuous and lofty moralist. Your pursuers are of another breed, another race. They soon tire themselves, hang out their tongues, and drop along the road. Time is not at all misapplied by you in the analysis and valuation of Southey's and Wordsworth's poetry, which never has been done scrupulously and correctly. But surely gravel may be carted and shot down on the highway without the measure of a Winchester bushel. Consider if what you have taken in hand is worthy of your workmanship.

Walter Landor. The most beautiful tapestry is worked on extremely coarse canvas. Open a volume of *Bayle's Biographical Dictionary*, and how many just and memorable observations will you find on people of no "note or likelihood"!

Archdeacon Hare. Unhappily for us, we are insensible of the corruptions that creep yearly into our language. At Cambridge or Oxford (I am ignorant which of them claims the glory of the invention), some undergraduate was so facetious as to say, "Well, while you are *discussing* the question, I will *discuss* my wine." The gracefulness of this witticism was so captivating that it took possession not only of both universities, but seized also on "men about town." Even the ladies, the vestals who preserve the purity

of language, caught up the expression from those who were libertines in it.

Walter Landor. Chesterfield and Horace Walpole, who are among the most refined of our senators, have at present no more authority in language than in dress. By what we see, we might imagine that the one article is to be cast aside after as short a wear as the other. It occurs to me at this moment, that, when we have assumed the habiliments of the vulgar, we are in danger of contracting their coarseness of language and demeanor.

Archdeacon Hare. Certainly the Romans were *togati* in their tongue as well as in their wardrobe. Purity and gravity of style were left uncontaminated and unshaken by the breath of Tiberius and his successor. The Antonines spoke better Latin than the Triumvir Antonius; and Marcus Aurelius, although on some occasions he preferred the Greek, was studious to maintain his own idiom strong and healthy. When the tongue is paralysed, the limbs soon follow. No nation hath long survived the decrepitude of its language.

There is perpetually an accession of slang to our vernacular, which is usually biennial or triennial.

Walter Landor. I have been either a fortunate or a prudent man to have escaped for so many years together to be "pitched into" among "*giant* trees," "*monster* meetings," "*glorious* fruit," "*splendid* cigars, dogs, horses, and *bricks*," "*palmy* days," "*rich* oddities;" to owe nobody a farthing for any other fashionable habits of rude device and demi-saison texture; and, above all, to have never come in at the "*eleventh hour*," which has been sounding all day long the whole year. They do me a little injustice who say that such good fortune is attributable to my residence in Italy. The fact is, I am too cautious and too aged to catch disorders, and I walk fearlessly through these epidemics.

Archdeacon Hare. Simply to *open* is insufficient: we "open *up*" and "open *out*." A gentleman *indues* a coat; it will be difficult to *exue* if he tries: he must lie down and sleep in it.

"*Foolery*" was thought of old sufficiently expressive: nothing short of *tom*foolery will do now. To *repudiate* was formerly to put away what disgraced us: it now signifies (in America at least) to reject the claims of justice and honor. We hear people *re-read*, and see them *re-write;* and are invited to a *spread*,

where we formerly went to a dinner or collation. We cut down *barracks* to a single *barrack ;* but we leave the "stocks" in good repair. We are among *ambitions* and among *peoples*, until Sternhold and Hopkins call us into a quieter place, and we hear once again—

"All people that on earth do dwell."

Shall we never have done with "*rule and exception*," "*ever and anon*," "*many a time and oft*" ?

Walter Landor. It is to be regretted that Horne Tooke and Bishop Lowth were placed so far apart, by many impediments and obstructions, that they never could unite in order to preserve the finials and pinnacles of our venerable fabric, to stop the innovations and to diminish the anomalies of our language. Southey, although in his youth during their time, might have assisted them ; for early in life he had studied as sedulously the best of our old authors as they had, and his judgment was as mature at twenty-five as theirs at fifty. He agreed with me that *mind*, *find*, *kind*, *blind*, *behind*, should have a final *e*, in order to signify the sound ; and that the verb *wind* should likewise, for the same reason. I brought Fairfax's *Tasso* with me, and showed him that Fairfax had done it, and had spelled many other words better than our contemporaries, or even than the most part of his own.

Archdeacon Hare. There are two expressions of frequent occurrence, equally wrong, — "incorrect *orthography*" and "vernacular *idiom*." Distempers in language, as in body, which rise from the crowded lane, creep up sometimes to where the mansions are higher and better ventilated. I think you once remarked to me that you would just as properly write pill*an*ger for pillager, as mess*en*ger for messager. The more excusable vulgar add to these dainties their *sausenger*. Have you found anything more to notice where you have inserted those slips of paper in your Fairfax ?

Walter Landor. Much ; to run over all would be tedious. He writes with perfect propriety *dismaid*, *applie*, *chefe*, *hart*, *wisht*, *husht*, *spred*. Southey was entirely of my opinion that, if *lead* in the present is *led* in the preterite, *read* should be *red*. There is no danger of mistaking the adjective for the verb by it. He ridiculed the spelling of Byron,—*redde ;* which is quite as ridicu-

lous as the conceit of that antiquarian society which calls itself the "Roxburghe Club;" *e* was never added to *burgh*.

Howell, a very careful writer, an excellent authority, writes *forren, frend, Mahometism, toung, extemporal, shipwrack, cole, onely, sutable, plaid, askt, begger, apparance, brest, yeer, lanch, peece, tresure, scepter, incertain, kinde, perle*.

Drayton and Daniel may be associated with Howell. Drayton in his prose wrote *red;* and there is no purer or more considerate author. He writes also ransack*t*, distinguish*t*, disperse*t*, worship*t*, admonish*t*, tax*t*, deck*t*, wrack*t*, profes*t*, extol*d*, purchas*t*. He writes *fained, tuch, yeers, onely, dore*.

Sir Thomas More writes *lerned, clereness, preste* (priest), *sholde, wolde, leve, yere, harte, mynde, here* (hear), *herer* (hearer), *appere, speker, seke, grevous, fynde, doute, wherof, seme, dede, nede, tethe* (teeth), *precher, peple, sene* (seen), *eres* (ears), *toke, therfor, mete* (meat), *frend, therin, fere* (fear), a *wever, rede* (read). A host of these words only show that the best authors avoided the double vowel.

Chaucer, in consecutive verses, writes *were* (wear) and *here* (bear) and *heven* and *foule*.

> "Upon her thombe or in her purse to bere."
> "There is no foule that flieth under heven."

Camden writes *forraine* and *iland*.

It was late before *ea* was employed in place of the simple vowel *e*. Chaucer writes "*eny pecock*." *Shal* and *wil*, so written by him, are more proper than *shall* and *will*, by avoiding the form of substantives. Caxton writes, as many of his time, *werk*, not "work." Tyndal, long after, writes *doo* for *do*. Spenser writes *dore* instead of *door*. Sackville writes *pearst*. Dryden is less accurate than Cowley and Waller and Sprat. Speaking of Cowley, he says, "He never could *forgive* a conceit," meaning *forego*. In our own age, many (Burke among the rest) say, "By *this* means." It would be affectation to say, "By this *mean*," in the singular; but the proper expression is, "By these means."

Archdeacon Hare. In regard to terminations, it is difficult to account for the letter *e* when we say "by and by*e*." There is none in accounting for it in "Good-*bye*," which is the most com-

prehensive of all contractions: it is, "Good be with ye!" or "God be with ye!" which in effect is the same. Formerly *ye* was more universal than *you*. Ignorant critics reprehend it wrongly in such a position as, "I would not hurt *ye*." But it is equally good English as, "*Ye* would not hurt me." No word is more thoroughly vernacular, from of old to this present day, among the people throughout the land. We should keep our homely, well-seasoned words, and never use the grave for light purposes.

Among the many we misapply is the word *destiny*. We hear of a man controlling the destiny of another. Nothing on earth can control the *destined*, whether the term be applied strictly or laxly. *Element* is another, meaning only a *constituent*. Graver still is *incarnation*. We hear about the *mission* of fellows whose highest could be only to put a letter into the post-office.

We usually set ' before *neath*, improperly: the better spelling is *nethe*, whence *nether*. We also prefix the same ' to *fore*. We say (at least those who swear do), "'*fore* God;" never, "*be*fore God." *Cause* in like manner is a word of itself, no less than "*be*cause." But this form is properer for poetry.

Chaucer writes *peple*, as we pronounce it.

Skelton writes *sault* and *mault*, also in accordance with the pronunciation; and there is exactly the same reason for it as in *fault*. It could not be going far out of our way to bring them back again, and then cry *hault*, which we do only with the pen in hand.

We are in the habitude of writing onward*s*, backward*s*, toward*s*, afterward*s*; he more gracefully drops the final *s*. We write strip*t*, whip*t*; yet hesitate at trip*t* and worship*t*. We possess in many cases two for one of the preterites; and, to show our impartiality and fairness, we pronounce the one and write the other. We write *said* and *laid*, but never *staid* or *plaid*. We write offic*i*al; why not influenc*i*al, circumstanc*i*al, differenc*i*al? We write *entrance* the substantive like *entrànce* the verb. Shakspeare wisely wrote,—

"That sounds the fatal enterance of Duncan," &c.

Wond*e*rous is a finer word than *wondrous*.

It is not every good scholar, or every fair poet, who possesses

the copiousness and exhibits the discrimination of Shakspeare. Even when we take the hand he offers us, we are accused of innovating.

Walter Landor. So far from innovating, the words I propose are brought to their former and legitimate station. You have sanctioned the greater part, and have thought the remainder worth your notice. Every intelligent and unprejudiced man will agree with you. I prefer high authorities to lower, analogy to fashion, a *Restoration* to a *Usurpation.* Innovators, and worse than innovators, were those Reformers called who disturbed the market-place of manorial theology, and went back to religion where she stood alone in her original purity. We English were the last people to adopt the reformed style in the calendar, and we seem determined to be likewise the last in that of language. We are ordered to please the public; we are forbidden to instruct it. Not only publishers and booksellers are against us, but authors too; and even some of them who are not regularly in the service of those masters. The outcry is, "*We* have not ventured to alter what we find in use, and why should *he?*"

Archdeacon Hare. If the most learned and intelligent, in that age which has been thought by many the most glorious in our literature, were desirous that the language should be settled and fixed, how much more desirable is it that its accretion of corruptions should be now removed! It may be difficult; and still more difficult to restore the authority of the ancient dynasty.

Walter Landor. We never have attempted it. But there are certain of their laws and usages which we would not willingly call obsolete. Often in the morning I have looked among your books for them, and I deposit in your hands the first-fruits of my research. It is only for such purposes that I sit hours together in a library. Either in the sunshine or under the shade of trees, I must think, meditate, and compose.

Archdeacon Hare. Thoughts may be born in a room above-stairs or below; but they are stronger and healthier for early exercise in the open air. It is not only the conspirator to whom is appropriate the "modo citus modo tardus incessus:" it is equally his who follows fancy, and his also who searches after truth.

Walter Landor. The treasures of your library have some-

times tempted me away from your pictures; and I have ceased for a moment to regret that by Selections and Compendiums we had lost a large portion of the most noble works, when I find so accurate a selection, so weighty a compendium, carried about with him who is now walking at my side.

Archdeacon Hare. I would have strangled such a compliment ere it had attained its full growth: however, now it is not only full-grown but over-grown, let me offer you in return, not a compliment, but a congratulation, on your courage in using the plural "compendi*ums*" where another would have pronounced "compendia."

Walter Landor. Would that other, whoever he may be, have said *musea?* All I require of people is consistency, and rather in the right than in the wrong. When we have admitted a Greek or Latin or French word, we ought to allow it the right of citizenship, and induce it to comply and harmonize with the rest of the vocular community. "Pindari*que*" went away with Cowley, and died in the same ditch with him; but "obli*que*" is inflexible, and stands its ground. He would do well who should shove it away, or push it into the ranks of the new militia. "Anti*que*" is the worst portion of Gray's heritage. His former friend, Horace Walpole, had many *antiques* and other trifles at Strawberry-hill; but none so worthless as this. In honest truth, we neither have, nor had then, a better and purer writer than he, although he lived in the time of the purest and best,—Goldsmith, Sterne, Fielding, and Inchbald. He gave up his fashionable French for a richer benefice. He would not use "*rouge*," but "*red*;" very different from the ladies and gentlemen of the present day, who bring in *entremets* and *lardès*, casting now and then upon the lukewarm hearth a log of Latin, and, in the sleeping-room they have prepared for us, spread out as counterpane a remnant of Etruscan, from under a courier's saddle-bag.

Chaucer, who had resided long in France, and much among courtiers, made English his style. Have you patience to read a list of the words he spelled better than we do; and not he only, but his remote successors?

Archdeacon Hare. I have patience, and more than patience, to read or hear or see whatever is better than ourselves. Such investigations have always interested me, you know of old.

Walter Landor. Rare quality! I scarcely know where to find another who possesses it, or whose anger would not obtain the mastery over his conscience at the imputation.

Let your eyes run down this catalogue. Here are *swete* and *swote*, *finde*, *ther*, *wel*, *herken*, *herk*, *gilt* (guilt), *shal*, *don* (done), *werks* (works), *weping*, *clene*, *defaulte*, *therof*, *speking*, *crthe*, *bereth* (beareth), *seate*, *mete* (meat), *shuld* (should), *hevy*, *hevn*, *grevous*, *grete*, *hete*, *yere*, *fode* (food); we still say *fodder*, not fooder; *ete* (eat), *lede*, *throt*, *wel*, *drede*, *shal*, *gess* (guess), *ful*, *wheras*, *trespas*, *betwene*, *repe*, *slepe*, *shete*, *frend*, *dedly*, *delites*, *teres*, *hering*, *clereness*, *juge*, *plese*, *speke*, *wold* (would), *ded*, *tred*, *bereve*, *thred*, *peple*, *dore*, *dreme*, *deme*, *reson*, *indede*, *meke*, *feble*, *wede*, *nede*, *fele*, *cese*, *pece*, *dedly*, *deme*, *resonable*, *slepe*, *titel*, *refrain*, *preeste*.

Archdeacon Hare. In adding the vowel, he makes it available for verse. *Covetise*, how much better than *covetiousness*? Among the words which might be brought back again to adorn our poetical diction is *beforne* (before). Here is *distemperament* (for inclemency of season); *forlet* (forgive), another good word; so is *wanhope* (despair). Has no poet the courage to step forth and to rescue these maidens of speech, unprotected beneath the very castle-walls of Chaucer?

Walter Landor. If they are resolved to stitch up his rich old tapestry with muslin, they would better let it stay where it is.

Archdeacon Hare. Several more words are remaining in which a single vowel is employed where we reduplicate. *Sheres*, *appere*, *speche*, *wele*, *bereth*, *reson*, *mening*, *pleasance*, *stele*, *coles*, *mekeness*, *reve* (bereave) *rore*, *tong*, *corageous*, *forbere*, *kepe*, *othe* (oath), *cese*, *shepe*, *dreme*, *werse* (worse), *reken* (reckon). Certainly this old spelling is more proper than its substitute. To reken is to *look over* an account before casting it up. Here are *grevance*, *lerne*, *bete*, *seke*, *speke*, *freze* (freeze), *chese*, *clense*, *tretise*, *meke*. Here I find *axe* (ask, which is now a vulgarism, though we use *tax* for *task*. With great propriety he writes *persever*; we, with great impropriety, *persevere*. He uses the word *spiced* for *overnice*, which in common use is *gingerly*. I think you would not be a stickler for the best of these, whichever it may be.

Walter Landor. No, indeed; but there are in Chaucer, as there are in other of our old yet somewhat later writers, things

which with regret I see cast aside for worse. I wish every editor of an author, whether in poetry or prose, would at least add a glossary of his words as he spelled and wrote them, without which attention the history of a language must be incomplete. Heine in his Virgil, Wakefield in his Lucretius, have preserved the text itself as entire as possible. Greek words do not appear in their spelling to have been subject to the same vicissitudes as Latin.

I have not been engaged in composing a grammar or vocabulary, nor is a conversation a treatise; so with your usual kindness you will receive a confused collection of words, bearing my mark on them and worthy of yours. They are somewhat like an Italian pastry, of heads and necks and feet and gizzards of a variety of birds of all sorts and sizes. If my simile is undignified, let me go back into the Sistine Chapel, where Michel Angelo displays the same thing more gravely and grandly in his *Last Judgment*.

Archdeacon Hare. Do not dissemble your admiration of this illustrious man, nor turn into ridicule what you reverence. Among the hardy and false things caught from mouth to mouth is the apothegm, that "there is only a step from the sublime to the ridiculous." There was indeed but a step from Bonaparte's.

Walter Landor. I perceive you accept the saying as his. It was uttered long before his birth, and so far back as the age of Louis the Fourteenth. Another is attributed to him, which was spoken by Barrère in the Convention. He there called the English "cette nation *boutiquière*.

Archdeacon Hare. Well, now empty out your sack of words, and never mind which comes first.

Walter Landor. Probably there are several of them which we have noticed before. Here are a few things which I have marked with my pencil from time to time; others are obliterated, others lost.

There is a very good reason why *ravel* and *travel* should be spelled with a single *l*: pronunciation requires it. Equally does pronunciation require a double *l* in *befell*, *expell*, *compell*.

We often find *kneeled* instead of *knelt*; yet I do not remember *feeled* for *felt*. Shaftesbury, and the best writers of his age and later, wrote *cou'd*, *shou'd*, *wou'd*: we do not, although in speaking we never insert the *l*. Hurd writes, "*Under* the *circumstances*." Circumstances are *about* us, not *above* us.

"Master of the situation" is the only expression we have borrowed lately of the Spanish, and it is not worth having.

I have observed *rent* as preterite of *rend*,—improper; as *ment* would be of *mend*.

"*All* too well," &c.,—the world *all* used needlessly. "*All* the greater," &c. These expressions are among the many which have latterly been swept out of the servants' hall, who often say (no doubt), "I am all the better for my dinner."

Daresay is now written as one word.

Egotist should be *egoist*; to *doze* should not be written *dose*, as it often is.

I once was present when a scholar used the words *vexed question*; he was not laughed at, although he was thought a pedant for it. Many would willingly be thought pedants who never can be; but they can more cheaply be thought affected, as they would be if they assumed this Latinism. In our English sense, many a question vexes: none is vexed. The sea is *vexatum* when it is tossed hither and thither, to and fro; but a question, however unsettled, has never been so called in good English.

"*Sought* his bedchamber;" improper, because he knew where it was. To *seek* is to go after what may or may not be found. *Firstly* is not English. To *gather* a rose is improper. To gather *two* roses would be proper. Better to *cull*, which may be said of choosing one out of several; *cull* is from the Italian *cogliere*, originally in Latin *colligare*. But to us, in our vernacular, the root is invisible: not so to *gather*, of which we are reminded by *together*.

There is a bull of the largest Irish breed in nearly the most beautiful of Wordsworth's poems:—

> "I lived upon what casual bounty yields,
> Now coldly given, *now utterly refused*."

The Irish need not cry out for their potatoes, if they can live upon what they cannot get.

> "The child is father of the man,"

says Wordsworth, well and truly. The verse animadverted on must have been written before the boy had begotten his parent.

What can be sillier than those verses of his which many have quoted with unsuspicious admiration?—

> "A maid whom there was none to praise,
> And very few to love."

He might have written more properly, if the rhyme and metre had allowed it,—

> A maid whom there were none to love,
> And very few to praise.

For surely the few who loved her would praise her. Here he makes love subordinate to praise: there were some who loved her, none (even of these) who praised her. Readers of poetry hear the bells, and seldom mind what they are ringing for. Where there is laxity there is inexactness.

Frequently there are solid knolls in the midst of Wordsworth's morass; but never did I expect to find so much animation, such vigor, such succinctness, as in the paragraph beginning with—

> "All degrees and shapes of spurious form,"

and ending with—

> "Left to herself, unheard of and unknown."

Here, indeed, the wagoner's frock drops off, and shows to our surprise the imperial purple underneath it. Here is the brevity and boldness of Cowper; here is heart and soul; here is the εικων βασιλικη of poetry.

I believe there are few, if any, who enjoy more heartily than I do the best poetry of my contemporaries, or who have commended them both in private and in public with less parsimony and reserve. Several of them, as you know, are personally my friends, although we seldom meet. Perhaps in some I may desiderate the pure ideal of what is simply great. If we must not always look up at Theseus and the Amazons, we may however catch more frequent glimpses of the Graces, with their zones on, and their zones only. Amplification and diffuseness are the principal faults of those who are now standing the most prominent. Dilution does not always make a thing the clearer: it may even cause turbidity.

Archdeacon Hare. Stiffness is as bad as laxness. Pindar and

Horace, Milton and Shakspeare, never caught the cramp in their mountain streams: their movements are as easy as they are vigorous.

Walter Landor. The strongest are the least subject to stiffness. Diffuseness is often the weakness of vanity. The vain poet is of opinion that nothing of his can be too much: he sends to you basketful after basketful of juiceless fruit, covered with scentless flowers.

Archdeacon Hare. Many an unlucky one is like the big and bouncing foot-ball, which is blown up in its cover by unseemly puffing, and serves only for the game of the day. I am half-inclined to take you to task, my dear friend, feeling confident and certain that I should do it without offence.

Walter Landor. Without offence, but not without instruction. Here I am ready at the desk, with both hands down.

Archdeacon Hare. To be serious. Are you quite satisfied that you never have sought a pleasure in detecting and exposing the faults of authors, even good ones?

Walter Landor. I have here and there sought that pleasure, and found it. To discover a truth, and to separate it from a falsehood is surely an occupation worthy of the best intellect, and not at all unworthy of the best heart. Consider how few of our countrymen have done it, or attempted it, on works of criticism: how few of them have analysed and compared. Without these two processes, there can be no sound judgment on any production of genius. We are accustomed to see the beadle limp up into the judge's chair, to hear him begin with mock gravity, and to find him soon dropping it for his natural banter. He condemns with the black cap on; but we discover through its many holes and dissutures the uncombed wig. Southey is the first and almost the only one of our critics who moves between his intellect and his conscience, close to each.

Archdeacon Hare. How much better would it be if our reviewers and magazine-men would analyze, in this manner, to the extent of their abilities, and would weigh evidence before they pass sentence. But they appear to think that, unless they hazard much, they can win little; while in fact they hazard and lose a great deal more than there is any possibility of their recovering. One rash decision ruins the judge's credit, which twenty correcter

never can restore. Animosity, or perhaps something more ignoble, usually stimulates rampant inferiority against high desert.

I have never found you disconcerted by any injustice toward yourself,—not even by the assailants of this our Reformation.

Walter Landor. If we know a minor, whose guardians and trustees have been robbing him of his patrimony, or misapplying it, or wearing out the land by bad tillage, would we not attempt to recover for him whatever we could; and especially if we were intimate with the family, if we had enjoyed the shade of its venerable woods, the refreshing breezes from its winding streams, and had in our early days taken our walks among them for study, and in our still earlier gone into the depths of its forests for our recreation?

Archdeacon Hare. Next in criminality to him who violates the laws of his country, is he who violates the language. In this he is a true patriot, and somewhat beside,—

"Qui consulta patrum qui leges juraque servat."

Byron is among the defaulters. On Napoleon he says, "Like *he* of Babylon." "The *annal* of Gibbon." "I have *eat*," &c. There is a passage in Tacitus on a vain poet, Luterius, remarkably applicable to our lately fashionable one; "Studia illa, ut plena vecordiæ, ita inania et fluxa sunt: nec quidquam grave ac serium ex eo metuas qui, suorum ipse flagitiorum proditor, non virorum animis sed muliercularum adrepit."

Walter Landor. It suits him perfectly. I would, however, pardon him some false grammar and some false sentiment, for his vigorous application of the scourge to the two monsters of dissimilar configuration who degraded and disgraced, at the same period, the two most illustrious nations in the world. The Ode against Napoleon is full of animation: against the other there is less of it; for animation is incompatible with nausea. Byron had good action; but he tired by fretting, and tossing his head, and rearing.

Archdeacon Hare. Let reflections for a moment give way to recollections. In the morning we were interrupted in some observations on the aspirate.

Walter Landor. Either I said, or was about to say, that

the aspirate, wherever it is written, should be pronounced. If we say "*a* house," why not say "*a* hour;" if "*a* horse," why not "*a* honor?" Nobody says "*an* heavy load," "*an* heavenly joy," "*an* holy man," "*an* hermit," "*an* high place," "*an* huge monster," "*an* holly-bough," "*an* happy day." Let the minority yield here to the majority. Our capriciousness in admitting or rejecting the service of the aspirate was contracted from the French. The Italians, not wanting it, sent it off, and called it back merely for a mark discriminatory; for instance in the verb *Ho, hai, ha.*

Archdeacon Hare. You have been accused of *phonetic* spelling.

Walter Landor. Inconsiderately, and with even less foundation than falsehood has usually under it. Nothing seems to me more grossly absurd, or more injurious to an ancient family,—the stem of our words and thoughts. Such a scheme, about fourscore years ago, was propounded by Elphinstone; it has lately been reproduced, only to wither and die down again.

Archdeacon Hare. I always knew, and from yourself, that you are a "good hater" of innovation, and that your efforts were made strenuously on the opposite side, attempting to recover in our blurred palimpsests what was written there of old. We have dropped a great deal of what is good, as you just now have shown; and we have taken into our employment servants without a character, or with a worthless one. We adorn our new curtains with faded fringe, and embellish stout buckskin with point-lace.

Walter Landor. After this conversation, if it ever should reach the public ear, I may be taken up for a brawl in the street,—more serious than an attack on the new grammar-school.

Archdeacon Hare. What can you mean? Taken up? For a brawl?

Walter Landor. Little are you aware that I have lately been accused of a graver offence, and one committed in the dark.

Archdeacon Hare. And in the dark you leave me. Pray explain.

Walter Landor. I am indicted for perpetrating an *Epic.*

Archdeacon Hare. Indeed! I am glad to hear the announcement. And when does the cause come into court? And who is the accuser? And what are his grounds?

Walter Landor. Longer ago by some years than half a century, I wrote *Gebir.* The cause and circumstances I have detailed elsewhere.

Archdeacon Hare. Is this the epic?

Walter Landor. It appears so.

Archdeacon Hare. Already you look triumphant from that ancient car.

Walter Landor. No, truly: I am too idle for a triumph; and the enemy's forces were so small that none could legitimately be decreed.

> "Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor
> Qui face barbaricos calamoque sequare colonos."

> "Surely shall some one come, alert and kind,
> With torch and quill to guide the blundering hind."

Archdeacon Hare. Clowns and boys and other idlers, if they see a head above a garden-wall, are apt to throw a pebble at it; which mischief they abstain from doing when the head is on their level and near.

Walter Landor. Nobody reads this poem, I am told; and nothing more likely.

Archdecaon Hare. Be that as it may, the most disappointed of its readers would be the reader who expected to find an epic in it. To the *epic* not only its certain spirit, but its certain form, is requisite; and not only in the main body, but likewise in the minute articulations. I do not call *epic* that which is in lyric metre, nor indeed in any species of rhyme. The cap and bells should never surmount the helmet and breastplate: Ariosto and Tasso are lyrical romancers. Your poem, which Southey tells us he took for a model, is in blank verse.

Walter Landor. Southey, whom I never had known or corresponded with, hailed it loudly in the *Critical Review*, on its first appearance. He recommended it to Charles Wynne; Charles Wynne, to the Hebers; they, to your uncle Shipley, Dean of St Asaph's. Southey's splendid criticism, whatever

may be the defects and deficiences of the poem, must have attracted at the time some other readers; yet I believe (though I never heard or inquired) that they were not numerous. Frere, Canning, and Bobus Smith were among them. Enough for me.

Within these few months, a wholesale dealer in the brittle crockery of market criticism has picked up some shards of it, and stuck them in his shelves. Among them is my *Sea-Shell*, which Wordsworth clapped into his pouch. There it became incrusted with a compost of mucus and shingle; there it lost its "pearly hue within," and its memory of where it had abided.

Archdeacon Hare. But Wordsworth had the industry and skill to turn every thing to some account.

Walter Landor. Perfectly true. And he is indebted to me for more than the value of twenty *Shells:* he is indebted to me for praise, if not more profuse, yet surely more discriminating, than of those critics who were collected at wakes and hired by party. Such hospital-nurses kill some children by starving, and others by pampering with unwholesome food.

Archdeacon Hare. I have often heard you express your admiration of Wordsworth; and I never heard you complain, or notice, that he owed any thing to you.

Walter Landor. Truly he owes me little. My shell may be among the prettiest on his mantelpiece; but a trifle it is at best. I often wish, in his longest poem, he had obtained an inclosure-act, and subdivided it. What a number of delightful idyls it would have afforded! It is pity that a vapor of metaphysics should overhang and chill any portion of so beautiful a plain; of which, however, the turf would be finer and the glebe solider for a moderate expenditure in draining and top-dressing.

Archdeacon Hare. Your predilections led you to rank Southey higher.

Walter Landor. Wordsworth has not written three poems so excellent as *Thalaba*, the *Curse of Kehama*, and *Roderic;* nor, indeed, any poem exhibiting so great a variety of powers. Southey had abundance of wit and humor, of which Wordsworth, like greater men,—such, for instance, as Goethe and Milton,—was destitute. The present age will easily pardon me for placing here the German and the Englishman together: the future, I

sadly fear, would, without some apology, be inexorable. If Wordsworth wants the diversity and invention of Southey, no less than the humor, he wants also the same geniality belonging in the same degree to Cowper, with terseness and succinctness.

Archdeacon Hare. You have often extolled, and in the presence of many the beauty of his rural scenes, and the truth of his rural characters.

Walter Landor. And never will I forego an opportunity. In the delineation of such scenes and characters, far, infinitely far, beneath him are Virgil and Theocritus. Yet surely it is an act of grievous cruelty, however unintentional, in those who thrust him into the same rank and file with Milton. He wants muscle, breadth of shoulder, and height.

Archdeacon Hare. Sometimes he may be prosaic.

Walter Landor. He slithers on the soft mud, and cannot stop himself until he comes down. In his poetry there is as much of prose as there is of poetry in the prose of Milton. But prose on certain occasions can bear a great deal of poetry: on the other hand, poetry sinks and swoons under a moderate weight of prose; and neither fan nor burned feather can bring her to herself again.

It is becoming and decorous that due honors be paid to Wordsworth; undue have injured him. Discriminating praise, mingled with calm censure, is more beneficial than lavish praise without it. Respect him: reverence him; abstain from worshipping him. Remember, no ashes are lighter than those of incense, and few things burn out sooner.

Archdeacon Hare. It appears that you yourself, of late, have not suffered materially by the wafting of the thurible.

Walter Landor. Faith! I had quite forgotten what we were speaking about last.

It was about myself, I suspect, and the worthy at Edinburgh who *reviews* me. According to him, it appears that only two had read *Gebir*,—namely, Southey and Mr De Quincey. I have mentioned a few others. I might have added Coleridge, to whom Southey lent it, and who praised it even more enthusiastically, until he once found Southey reciting a part of it in company; after which, I am told, he never mentioned it, or slightly. In the year of its publication, Carey, translator of Dante,

had praised it. His opinion of it I keep to myself, as one among the few which I value. This was long before Mr De Quincey knew Southey. It is marvellous that a man of so retentive a memory as Southey should have forgotten a thing to which he himself had given its importance: it is less so that Mr De Quincey imagined it, under the influence of that narcotic the effects of which he so ingenuously and so well described, before he exhibited this illustration.

He had another *imaginary conversation* with Southey, in which they agree that *Gebir* very much resembled the *Argonautics* of Valerius Flaccus. Hearing of this, about a twelvemonth ago, I attempted to read that poem; but was unsuccessful. Long before, and when my will was stronger, I foundered in the midst of Statius. Happily, in my school-days I had mastered Lucan and Juvenal.

Archdeacon Hare. They are grandly declamatory; but declamation overlays and strangles poetry, and disfigures even satire.

Walter Landor. Reserving the two mentioned, and Martial, I doubt whether the most speculative magazine-man would hazard five pounds for the same quantity of *English* poetry (rightly called *letter-press*) as all the other post-Ovidian poets have left behind. After the banishment of Ovid, hardly a breath of pure poetry breathed over the *Campagna di Roma*. Declamation was spouted in floodgate verse: Juvenal and Lucan are high in that school, in which, at the close of the poetical day, was heard the street cow-horn of Statius.

Archdeacon Hare. Even for the company of such as these, I think I would have left the Reeker in *Auld Reekie*. Flies are only the more troublesome and importunate for being driven off, and they will keep up with your horse, however hard you ride, without any speed or potency of their own.

Walter Landor. True; but people who sell unsound wares, and use false scales and measures, ought to be pointed out and put down, although we ourselves may be rich enough to lose an ounce or two by their filching.

Archdeacon Hare. No one ever falls among a crowd of literary men without repenting of it sooner or later. You may encounter a single hound outside the kennel; but there is danger if you enter in among them, even with a kind intention and a bland countenance.

Walter Landor. It must be a dog in the distemper that raises up his spine at me. I have spoken favorably of many an author; undeservedly, of none: therefore both at home and abroad I have received honorary visits from my countrymen and from foreigners.

Archdeacon Hare. Possibly there may be some of them incontinent of the acrimonious humor pricking them in the paroxysm of wit. I know not whether there be any indication of it in the soil under your shovel. Grains of wit, however, may sometimes be found in petulance, as grains of gold in quartz; but petulance is not wit nor quartz gold.

Are you aware how much thought you have here been throwing away?

Walter Landor. My dear friend! thought is never thrown away: wherever it falls, or runs, or rests, it fertilizes. I speak not of that thought which has evil in it, or which tends to evil, but of that which is the exercise of intellect on the elevated and healthy training-ground of truth. We descend; and, as we descend, we may strike off the head of a thistle, or blow away the wandering seed of a dandelion which comes against the face; but, in a moment, forgetting them totally, we carry home with us freshness and strength.

Archdeacon Hare. I have never known you, at any former time, take much trouble about your literary concerns.

Walter Landor. Never have I descended to repel an attack, and never will; but I must defend the understanding and consistency of a wiser and better man in Southey. Never have I feared that a little and loose petard would burst or unhinge the gates of my fortress, or that a light culverin at a vast distance below would dismantle or reach the battlements.

Archdeacon Hare. It is dangerous to break into a park where the paling is high; for it may be difficult to find the way out again, or to escape the penalty of transgression. You never before spoke a syllable about your *Shell.*

Walter Landor. The swallow builds her nest under a Doric architrave, but does not build it of the same materials.

Archdeacon Hare. It is amusing to observe the off-hand facility and intrepid assurance with which small writers attack the greater, as small birds do, pursuing them the more vociferously the higher the flight. Milton stooped and struck down two or three of these

obstreperous chatterers, of which the feathers he scattered are all that remains ; and these are curiosities.

It is moroseness to scowl at the levity of impudence ; it is affability, not without wisdom, to be amused by it. Graver men, critics of note, have seen very indistinctly where the sun has been too bright for them. Gifford, the translator of Juvenal, who was often so grave that ordinary people took him for judicious, thought wit the better part of Shakspeare, and in which alone he was superior to his contemporaries. Another finds him sadly deficient in his female characters. Johnson's ear was insensible to Milton's diapason ; and in his Life of Somerville he says,—

"If blank verse be not tumid and gorgeous, it is crippled prose."

Walter Landor. Johnson had somewhat of the medlar in his nature : one side hard and austere, the other side unsound. We call him *affected* for his turgidity : this was not affected ; it was the most natural part of him. He hated both affectation and tameness.

Archdeacon Hare. Two things intolerable, whether in prose or poetry. Wordsworth is guiltless at least of affectation.

Walter Landor. True ; but he often is as tame as an abbess's cat, which in kittenhood has undergone the same operation as the Holy Father's choristers.

Archdeacon Hare. Sometimes, indeed, he might be more succinct. A belt is good for the breath, and without it we fail in the long run. And yet a man will always be more looked at whose dress flutters in the air than he whose dress sits tight upon him ; but he will soon be left on the roadside. Wherever there is a word beyond what is requisite to express the meaning, that word must be peculiarly beautiful in itself or strikingly harmonious ; either of which qualities may be of some service in fixing the attention and enforcing the sentiment. But the proper word in the proper place seldom leaves any thing to be desiderated on the score of harmony. The beauty of health and strength is more attractive and impressive than any beauty conferred by ornament. I know the delight you feel, not only in Milton's immortal verse, but (although less) in Wordsworth's.

Walter Landor. A Mozart to a Handel ! But who is not charmed by the melody of Mozart ? Critics have their favorites ;

and, like the same rank of people at elections, they chair one candidate and pelt another.

Archdeacon Hare. A smaller object may be so placed before a greater as to intercept the view of it in its just proportions. This is the favorite manœuvre in the Review-field. Fierce malignity is growing out of date. Nothing but fairness is spoken of; regret at the exposure of faults, real or imaginary, has taken the place of derision, sarcasm, and arrogant condemnation. Nothing was wanting to Byron's consistency when he had expressed his contempt of Shakspeare.

Walter Landor. Giffords, who sniffed at the unsavory skirts of Juvenal, and took delight in paddling among the bubbles of azote, no longer ply the trade of critics to the same advantage. Generosity, in truth or semblance, is expected and required. Chattertons may die in poverty and despair; but Keatses are exposed no longer to a lingering death under that poison which paralyzes the heart,—contempt.

Archdeacon Hare. In youth the appetite for fame is strongest. It is cruel and inhuman to withhold the sustenance which is necessary to the growth, if not the existence, of genius,—sympathy, encouragement, commendation. Praise is not fame; but the praise of the intelligent is its precursor. *Vaticide* is no crime in the statute-book: but a crime, and a heavy crime, it is; and the rescue of a poet from a murderous enemy, although there is no oaken crown decreed for it, is among the higher virtues.

Walter Landor. Many will pass by; many will take the other side; many will cherish the less deserving: but some one, considerate and compassionate, will raise up the neglected; and, where a strong hand does it, several less strong will presently be ready to help. Alas! not always. There is nothing in the ruins of Rome which throws so chilling a shadow over the heart as the monument of Keats.

Our field of poetry at the present time is both wider and better cultivated than it has ever been. But if the tyrant of old who walked into the growing corn, to inculcate a lesson of *order* by striking off the heads of the higher poppies, were to enter ours, he would lay aside his stick, so nearly on a level is the crop. Every year there is more good poetry written now, in

this our country, than was written between the *Metamorphoses* and the *Divina Commedia*. We walk no longer in the cast-off clothes of the ancients, often ill sewn at first, and now ill-fitting. We have pulpier flesh, stouter limbs; we take longer walks, explore wider fields, and surmount more craggy and more lofty eminences. From these let us take a leisurely look at Fancy and Imagination. Your friend Wordsworth was induced to divide his minor poems under the separate heads of these two, probably at the suggestion of Coleridge, who persuaded him, as he himself told me, to adopt the name of *Lyrical Ballads*. He was sorry, he said, that he took the advice. And well he might be; for *lyre* and *ballad* belong not to the same age or the same people. It would have puzzled Coleridge to have drawn a straight boundary-line between the domains of Fancy and those of Imagination, on a careful survey of these pieces; or perhaps to have given a satisfactory definition of their qualities.

Archdeacon Hare. Do you believe you yourself can?

Walter Landor. I doubt it. The face is not the same, but the resemblance is sisterly; and, even by the oldest friends and intimates of the family, one is often taken for the other, so nearly are they alike. Fancy is Imagination in her youth and adolescence. Fancy is always excursive; Imagination, not seldom, is sedate. It is the business of Imagination, in her maturity, to create and animate such beings as are worthy of her plastic hand; certainly not by invisible wires to put marionettes in motion, nor to pin butterflies on blotting-paper. Vigorous thought, elevated sentiment, just expression, development of character, power to bring man out from the secret haunts of his soul, and to place him in strong outline against the sky, belong to Imagination. Fancy is thought to dwell among the Fairies and their congeners; and they frequently lead the weak and ductile poet far astray. He is fond of playing at *little-go* among them; and, when he grows bolder, he acts among the Witches and other such creatures; but his hankering after the Fairies still continues. Their tiny rings, in which the intelligent see only the growth of funguses, are no arena for action and passion. It was not in these circles that Homer and Æschylus and Dante strove.

Archdeacon Hare.—But Shakespeare sometimes entered them, who, with infinitely greater power, moulded his composite and

consistent man, breathing into him an immortality never to be forfeited.

Walter Landor. Shakespeare's full strength and activity were exerted on Macbeth and Othello: he trifled with Ariel and Titania; he played with Caliban; but no other would have thought of playing with him, any more than of playing with Cerberus. Shakespeare and Milton and Chaucer have more imagination than any of those to whom the quality is peculiarly attributed. It is not inconsistent with vigor and gravity. There may be a large and effuse light without—

"The motes that people the sunbeams."

Imagination follows the steps of Homer throughout the Troad, from the ships on the strand to Priam and Helen on the city-wall. Imagination played with the baby Astyanax at the departure of Hector from Andromache; and was present at the noblest scene of the *Iliad*, where, to repeat a verse of Cowper's on Achilles, more beautiful than Homer's own,—

"His hand he placed
On the old man's hand, *and pushed it gently away.*

No less potently does Imagination urge Æschylus on, from the range of beacons to the bath of Agamemnon; nor expand less potently the vulture's wing over the lacerated bosom on the rocks of Caucasus. With the earliest flowers of the freshly created earth, Imagination strewed the nuptial couch of Eve. Not Ariel, nor Caliban, nor Witches who ruled the elements, but Eve and Satan and Prometheus, are the most wondrous and the most glorious of her works. Imagination takes the weaker hand of Vigil out of Dante's who grasps it, and guides the Florentine exile through the triple world.

Archdeacon Hare. Whatever be your enthusiasm for the great old masters, you must often feel, if less of so strong an impulse, yet a cordial self-congratulation in having bestowed so many eulogies on poetical contemporaries, and on others whose genius is apart from poetry.

Walter Landor. Indeed I do. Every meed of Justice is delivered out of her own full scale. The poets, and others who may rank with them,—indeed, all the great men,—have borne

towards me somewhat more than civility. The few rudenesses I have ever heard of are from such as neither I nor you ever meet in society, and such as warm their fingers and stomachs round less ornamental hearths.

When they to whom we have been unknown, or indifferent, begin to speak a little well of us, we are sure to find some honest old friend ready to trim the balance. I have had occasion to smile at this.

Archdeacon Hare. We sometimes stumble upon sly invidiousness and smouldering malignity, quite unexpectedly, and in places which we should have believed were above the influence of such malaria. When Prosperity pays to Wisdom her visit in state, would we not, rather than halloo the yard-dog against her, clear the way for her, and adorn the door with garlands? How fond are people in general of clinging to a great man's foibles!—they can climb no higher. It is not the solid, it is the carious, that grubs feed upon.

Walter Landor. The practice of barring out the master is still continued in the world's great school-room. Our sturdy boys do not fear a flogging: they fear only a book or a lecture.

Archdeacon Hare. Authors are like cattle going to a fair: those of the same field can never move on without butting one another.

Walter Landor. It has been my fortune and felicity, from my earliest days to have avoided all competitions. My tutor at Oxford could never persuade me to write a piece of Latin poetry for the prize, earnest as he was that his pupil should be a winner at the forthcoming *Encænia.* Poetry was always my amusement; prose, my study and business. I have published five volumes of *Imaginary Conversations:* cut the worst of them through the middle, and there will remain in this decimal fraction quite enough to satisfy my appetite for fame. I shall dine late; but the dining-room will be well lighted, the guests few and select.

In this age of discovery it may haply be discovered who first among our Cisalpine nations led Greek to converse like Greek, Roman like Roman, in poetry or prose. Gentlemen of fashion have patronized them occasionally,—have taken them under the arm, have recommended their own tailor, their own perfumer,

and have lighted a cigar for them from their own at the door of the *Traveller's* or *Athenæum:* there they parted.

Archdeacon Hare. Before we go into the house again, let me revert to what you seem to have forgotten,—the hasty and inaccurate remarks on *Gebir*.

Walter Landor. It is hardly worth our while. Evidently they were written by a very young person, who, with a little encouragement, and induced to place his confidence in somewhat safer investment than himself, may presently do better things.

Archdeacon Hare. Southey too, I remember, calls the poem in some parts obscure.

Walter Landor. It must be, if Southey found it so. I never thought of asking him where lies the obscurity; I would have attempted to correct whatever he disapproved.

Archdeacon Hare. He himself, the clearest of writers, professes that he imitated your versification; and the style of his *Colloquies* is in some degree modified by yours.

Walter Landor. Little cause had he for preferring any other to his own.

Perhaps the *indictum ore alio* is my obscurity. Goethe is acknowledged by his highest admirers to be obscure in several places; which he thinks a poet may and should be occasionally. I differ from him, and would avoid it everywhere: he could see in the dark. This great poet carries it with him so far as into *epigram*. I now regret that I profited so little by the calm acuteness of Southey. In what poet of the last nineteen centuries, who has written so much, is there less intermixture of prose, or less contamination of conceit? In what critic, who has criticised so many, less of severity or assumption?

I would never fly for shelter under the strongest wing; but you know that commentators, age after age, have found obscurities in Pindar, in Dante, and in Shakespeare.

Archdeacon Hare. And it is not in every place the effect of time. You have been accused, I hear, either by this writer or some such another, of *turgidity*.

Walter Landor. Certainly by this: do not imagine there is anywhere such another.

Archdeacon Hare. Without a compliment, no poet of ours is less turgid. Guests may dispense with pottage and puff-paste,

with radishes and water-cresses, with salad and cream-cheese, who "implentur veteris bacchi pinguisque ferinæ."

Walter Landor. Encouraged by your commendation, let me read to you (for I think I placed it this evening in my pocket) what was transcribed for me as a curiosity, out of the same *Article.* Yes; here it is:—

"His great defect is a certain crudeness of the judgment, implied in the selection of the subject-matter, and a further want of skill and perspicuity in the treatment. Except in a few passages, it has none of those peculiar graces of style and sentiment which render the writings of our more prominent modern authors so generally delightful."

Archdeacon Hare. Opinion on most matters, but chiefly on literary, and, all above, on poetical, seems to me like an empty eggshell in a duck-pond, turned on its stagnant water by the slightest breath of air; at one moment the cracked side nearer to sight, at another the sounder, but the emptiness at all times visible.

Is your detractor a brother poet.

Walter Landor. An incipient one he may be. Poets in that stage of existence, subject to sad maladies, kick hard for life, and scratch the nurse's face. Like some trees, — fir trees, for instance,—they must attain a certain height and girth before they are serviceable or sightly.

Archdeacon Hare. The weakest wines fall soonest into the acetous fermentation: the more generous retain their sweetness with their strength. Somewhat of this diversity is observable in smaller wits and greater, more especially in the warm climate where poetry is the cultivation.

Walter Londor. The ancients often hung their trophies on obtruncated and rotten trees: we may do the like at present, leaving our enemies for sepulture.

Archdeacon Hare. Envy of pre-eminence is universal and everlasting. Little men, whenever they find an opportunity, follow the steps of greater in this dark declivity. The apple of discord was full-grown soon after the creation. It fell between the two first brothers in the garden of Eden; it fell between two later on the plain of Thebes. Narrow was the interval, when again it gleamed portentously on the short grass of Ida. It rolled into the palace of Pella, dividing Philip and "Philip's godlike son;"

it followed that insatible youth to the extremities of his conquests, and even to his sepulchre; then it broke the invincible phalanx and scattered the captains wide apart. It lay in the gates of Carthage, so that they could not close against the enemy; it lay between the generous and agnate families of Scipio and Gracchus. Marius and Sulla, Julius and Pompeius, Octavius and Antonius, were not the last who experienced its fatal malignity. King imprisoned king; emperor stabbed emperor; pope poisoned pope, contending for God's vicegerency. The roll-call of their names, with a cross against each, is rotting in the lumber-room of history. Do not wonder, then, if one of the rabble runs after you from the hustings, and, committing no worse mischief, snatches at the colors in your hatband.

Walter Landor. Others have snatched more. My quarry lies upon a high common a good way from the public road, and everybody takes out of it what he pleases "with privy paw, and nothing said" beyond, *A curse on the old fellow! how hard his granite is! one can never make it fit.*" This is all I get of quit-rent or acknowledgment. I know of a poacher who noosed a rabbit on my warren, and I am told he made such a fricassee of it that there was no taste of rabbit or sauce. I never had him taken up: he is at large, dressed in new clothes, and worth money.

Archdeacon Hare. Your manors are extensive, comprehending—

> "Prata, arva, ingentes sylvas, saltusque paludesque
> Usque ad oceanum."

Walter Landor. I never drive the poor away, if they come after dry sticks only; but they must not with impunity lop or burn my plantations.

Archdeacon Hare. I regret that your correspondent was sickened or tired of transcribing.

Walter Landor. Here is another slip from the same crab-tree. It is objected that most of my poems are occasional.

Archdeacon Hare. In number they may be; but in quantity of material I doubt whether they constitute a seventh. We will look presently, and we shall find perhaps that the gentleman is unlucky at his game of hazard.

Walter Landor. Certainly his play is not deep. We who are sober dare not sit down at a table where a character may be lost at

a cast: they alone are so courageous who have nothing to be seized on.

Archdeacon Hare. The gentleman sweeps the cloth with little caution and less calculation. Of your poems, the smaller alone are occasional: now not only are the smaller, but the best, of Catullus and Horace, and all of Pindar. Were not the speeches of Lysias, Æschines, Demosthenes, occasional? Draw nearer home: what but occasional were the *Letters of Junius? Materiem superabat opus.*

Walter Landor. True. The ministers and their king are now mould and worms: they were little better when above-ground; but the bag-wig and point-lace of *Junius* are suspended aloft upon a golden peg, for curiosity and admiration.

Archdeacon Hare. Regarding the occasional in poetry, is there less merit in taking and treating what is before us, than in seeking and wandering through an open field as we would for mushrooms?

Walter Landor. I stand out a rude rock in the middle of a river, with no exotic or parasitical plant on it, and few others. Eddies and dimples and froth and bubbles pass rapidly by, without shaking me. Here, indeed, is little room for pic-nic and polka.

Archdeacon Hare. Praise and censure are received by you with nearly the same indifference.

Walter Landor. Not yours. Praise on poetry, said to be the most exhilarating of all, affects my brain but little. Certainly, I never attempted to snatch "the peculiar graces so generally delightful." My rusticity has at least thus much of modesty in it.

Archdeacon Hare.

> "The richest flowers have not most honey-cells.
> You seldom find the bee about the rose,
> Oftener the beetle eating into it.
> The violet less attracts the noisy hum
> Than the minute and poisonous bloom of box.
> Poets know this; Nature's invited guests
> Draw near and note it down and ponder it;
> The idler sees it, sees unheedingly,
> Unheedingly the rifler of the hive."

Is your critic wiser, more experienced, and of a more poetical mind than Southey? *Utri horum creditis, Quirites?*

Vanity and presumption are not always the worst parts of the man they take possession of, although they are usually the most prominent. Malignity sticks as closely to him, and keeps more cautiously out of sight. Sorry I have often been to see a fellow-Christian — one of much intellect and much worth, one charitable to the poor, one attendant on the sick, one compassionate with the sufferer, one who never is excited to anger, but by another's wrongs — enjoying a secret pleasure in saying unpleasant things at no call of duty; inflicting wounds which may be long before they heal; and not only to those who are unfriendly or unknown, but likewise to the nearest and the friendliest. Meanwhile those who perhaps are less observant of our ritual not only abstain from so sinful an indulgence, but appear to be guided in their demeanor by the less imperative and less authoritative dictate of philosophy. I need not exhort or advise you, who have always done it, to disregard the insignificant and obscure, so distant from you, so incapable of approaching you. Only look before you at this instant; and receive a lesson from Nature, who is able and ready at all times to teach us, and to teach men wiser than we are. Unwholesome exhalations creep over the low marshes of Pevensey; but they ascend not to Beachyhead nor to Hurstmonceaux.

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